



# OF THE EARTH

RU-MI-LOU BOOKS OTTAW





A STORY OF THE

BY

CHAS. W. PETERSON



RU-MI-LOU BOOKS - OTTAWA

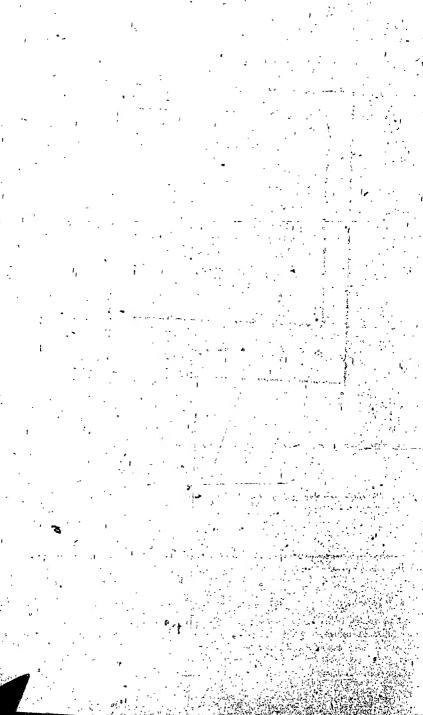
PETERSON, CW

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Whose bright, intelligent comradeship and gentle forbearance is retarding the flight of time itself and radiantly illuminating the eventide of my life, this book is gratefully dedicated. C.W.P.



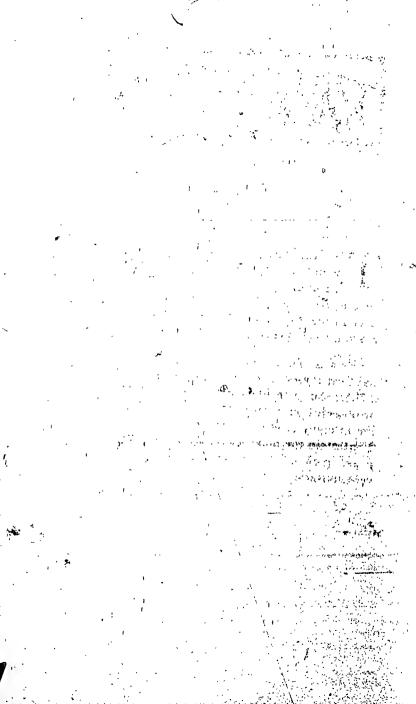


### PREFACE

HERE seems to be a persistent demand for a plain, unvarished story of the prairie farm, truthfully portraying the hopes, ambitions, disappointments and environment of pioneer life, without introducing the artificial glamour of the conventional roaring cowpuncher or "Royal Mounted" hero.

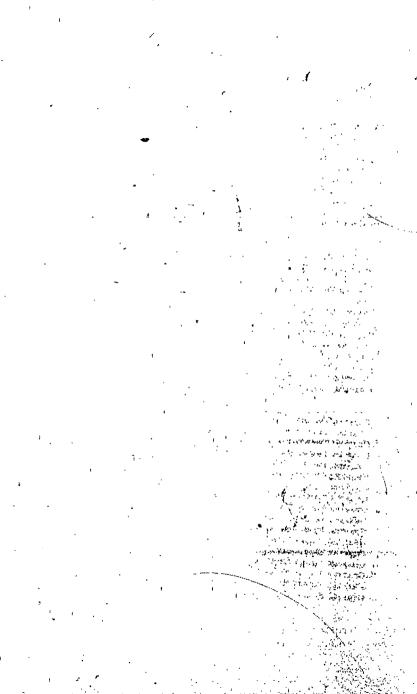
This is the task—not an easy one, I fear—which I have set myself in writing this book. There is scarcely a character or incident not drawn from personal contact or observation during my life in the West, now covering so many eventful years that I hate to count them. I entertain the hope that what the story lacks in "suspense periods" may be even partly compensated for in veraciousness.

THE AUTHOR



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The ALARM is given. A smoke signal ascends towards the clouds, followed by a second and a third. A small Indian scouting party is apprehensively watching a distant cavalcade, slowly wending its way westward over the prairies. As it draws closer, the Redskins cautiously disappear over the hill. The rattling and shricking of crude, wooden wheels herald the approach of a train of Red River carts heavily laden with supplies and merchandise. The exhausted stock, lean and footsore, lumber inwilligity over the rough prairie, geaded into further effort by the incessant shouts and lashings of the drivers. They are approaching the end of the weary overland journey. The first wagon trail has left its devious imprint upon the prairie sad. The way has at last been blazed into the trackless wilderness.

Presently, a halt is made, camp is established, logs cut and rude buildings erected within a stockade. The first outpost of civilization. The new trading post establishes friendly, but cautious, intercourse with the natives. It takes his fure in eachange for the useful products of civilization—such precious possessions as needles, thread and whatnot—while his pelts, the only result of his in-

dustry, go to the crowded marte overseas.

Come the white men in the black garbs, carrying the Word into the tepess of the Indian. Braving untold hardships and dangers, these devoted servants of God leave the beaten paths and reach with their message the univest corners of the sust new land. The strange cult of loving your enemies and having only one squair to do your work seems fantastic to the untutored mind. But there is no accounting for the white man's droll ideas! They must not however turn their young braces into milk-seps. Labouriously the missionary gains converts and a rade church is established. The wildsness hours the

age-old hymns translated into weird language, set to weirder

The Cross has been planted. . . .

Furtively there enters a bronzed man with a rough beard and bleary eyes. He brings the flery liquid that transports the Indian into realms of blies and instills courage even into the heart of the craven. Ah, what a potent liquor it is! And why does the missionary forbid them to partake of this delectable drink! Why does he dislike this superman whose magic dissolves all their cares and troubles? They are both white. They have the same God. But white men are queer!

Presently, a mounted body of strapping young fellows in red coals appear. The majesty of the law! The whisky trader packs up his stock and loot, and the wilderness swallows him up. Law and order must henceforth rule supreme. Protection of property and human life has been assured. The Indian shrugs his shoulders. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," the ancient law of the tepee, is the only code that commends his respect.

The Great White Mother sends delegates, surrounded with much pomp and garbed in splendid clothes, to treat with the Redskin for the surrender of his right to room the endless prairies as lord of all he beholds. He shall be given broad acres of his own, money tokens and food in plenty. The white man is land hungry. The Indian, suspiciously and reluctantly, acquiesces:

Great herds of footsore cattle, driven by hard-living hard-swearing men in wide brimmed sombreros riding raw-boned, many-coloured ponies, now invade the fat prairie pastures where the buffalo has held supreme stoay from time immemorial. . . . Many bleached banes nobes the following winter's snows finally disappear, bear witness to the rigorous cold of this new range country. But cattle are cheap. The law of the survival of the fitiest must prevail. It is a cruel formula to man and beastles

But what is this! A small party moves slowly across the prairies. The leader sets up a purious instrument.

Another moves ahead with a rod. The prairie is being measured and divided into small squares, each with its own number. The white man can now settle on the land and establish his ownership to a definite part of the surface of the earth. Space is left for wide roads. Countless millions will some day live and die here. The foundation of all this must be well and truly laid.

Clearly silhousted against the horizon, a train of wagons, covered with white canvas, moves blouly over the distant kill top. As they approach one tees the women clutching reins with both hands—a baby or young child on lap—peering out from the interior, while the men, slouching in the saddles, lead the way or drive the liquitock in the rear. The emaciated, sweat warked frames of the horses testify to a long and weary journey. The rattling wheels, patched and mended, revolve in squeaking protest. And the cargo! Tin stoves, washtube, walking ploughs, tools, crocks—very portable farm and household implement that comes within the owners' means. A crate of poultry is lasked to each vide of the wagon? A veritable Noah's Ark is this sprain schooner. And like Noah, the immigrant is bound on the great quest for a new home.

The vagon train, amidet the enviring dust raised by the dragging hoofs of the sorely tried leams, comes to a half upon an attractive spot. A living spring, running ice cold on this blistering afternoon, sinds a silver thread down the hill, meandering through the green grass and losing itself in the underbruck. Clumps of poplar afford, unlawing shade to trail form man and boast. Why go further Here is grass, gater thefter, firmwood. What more can a man want!

The lease are unkitched and turned loose. They will not stray for away. Rid of harness and fullship collars, they proceed to coll on the warm earth to clean and purify their event-encrusted hides. Ah, what a blessed relial. They voll on one side and then on the other, enderworsing their strains and wild bicking to turn completely over

The cattle bury their noses in the rank vegetation, pushing it impatiently from one side to the other, hardly knowing where to begin on the forthcoming feast. This is the land of plenty, flowing with milk and honey—the bovine "happy hunting ground". The poultry crates are opened. The rooster emerges, stretching his legs and flapping his wings and begins, industriously, to scratch for titbits for his feathered harem. The dogs lie, exhausted and panting, in the cool shade under the wagons.

The "captain" of the caravan squats down on the prairie, surrounded by his followers. The children play about, unconcerned with the weighty decisions agitating the minds of their parents. For better or worse a selection has been made. Much country, good, bad and indifferent, has been traversed since they left home, but chilly autumn is coming on and a vast task lies before them, getting settled in such rude comfort as they have been accustomed to. Hay must be made for wintering the stock and shelter erected against the blasting upinds and starms of this northern latitude. Reports my that the winter is not unpleasant; that stock may rustle out most of the year. But who knows? And in any event human beings must have shelter.

It is a great adventure this pioneering in new countries. But their fathers faced it in Iowa and they themselves faced it in Nebraska. They and their children—the vanguard of humanity—must now found homes and subdue the prairie of Western Canada where good land is still free and range unlimited. Of course, it lies within the British Empire and beyond the sphere of the Stars and Stripes". But what of that? The soil is fat and free that is the thing.

The pioneering spirit is within them. Each generation must perforce do its part in opening up new country and then pass on to God knows where. Little lonely graves along the route of each new trek bear silvit testimony to the impelling urge of this "wanderlust". Or, perhaps, the Almighty, in His wisdom, created a special breed of men and women whose instorable task it is to lead and prepare the way into the unknown places of the earth for sefter and less resourceful beings. Be that as it may, the pioneer goes about his task stolidly and uncomplainingly. God bless him and rest him!

The stock is now getting fat and sleek. Everything will

The stock is now getting fat and sleek. Everything will be well by the time the snow comes. Provisions are a little low. But the ranchman up the valley has staked them to a few begs of flour and potatoes. To be sure he was not organisased to see them squat on that spring where his breeking bunch watered all last winter, when most of the other living springs were frozen up completely. But they seek honest and hard working folk. They would be glad to earn a little extra money during haying. That is worth considering. Of course the Stock Association must keep an eye on them. They do not look and act like cattle rustlers, but the temptation to pick up an unbranded calf or to appropriate a winter's supply of juicy beef is always there. God knows that many a good man has partaken of the forbidden fruit. Decidedly, these people must be carefully watched.

Wonder of wonders! A great camp has been erected on the older side of the "divide". One of the children, riding the range, looking for a struyed milch row saw this marvellous sight from the top of the highest hill. It was a busy spot. Enormous cook fents and horse tents, piles of ploughs and scrapers and construction paraphernalia. A stream of men and teams constantly coming and going. Following a line of gleaming white stakes, with mysterious inscriptions, they are building a grade. Beking them the ties are laid and still farther back a tracklaying gang completes the job. The great is an horse is about to eiter the West. The day of isolation is over

The settler may now travel luxus jourly from East to West. While folling in leather upholitered chairs viewing the passing landscape through plate place windows, his meals are served on spoiless linen. Soft spoken men of business are wending their way westward to put up counting houses and warehouses to serve the growing settlement of that lone West they read about in their youth. The great out-of-doors is pregnant with golden grain and fat cattle and ready to pay tribute to the middleman to the railway and to the multitude which threes on the farmer's toil.

"God made the country and man made the lown of course, see must have towns. Yes, and town lots. Are not these rich prairies destined to become the home of teeming millions of settlers? Who can doubt it? These wind-swept villages must perfore become prasperous centres and the straggling, unlovely towns are indubitably destined to blossom into great cities! Madriess takes possession of men and they become seized with the fever of speculation. Vast areas are staked out into narrow, mean, little lots, which change hands at ever increasing prices.

Greed and falsehood stalk abroad in God's slew daylight and grasp men's souls. Fantastic rumours of great
and imminent development pass from mouth to mouth and
the last remnant of mental balance is lost. Men well lote
in their offices, in their homes, in their churches. The
clerk behind the counter, the butcher, the baler, the candlestick-maker—all fall a prey to the disease that his laid its
blighting hand on the young country. Programme and
an outrage, this mad, sulgar trafficking in good, honest
soil that even yesterday was there for the taking

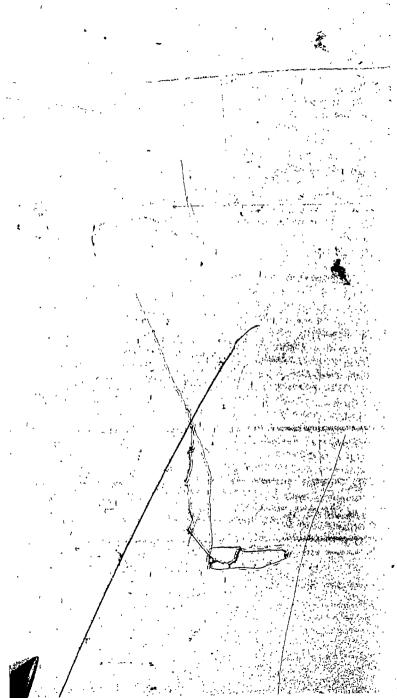
But Nemerie is lying in wait. The bubble bursts the whole house of casts crashes to the ground. The real estate millionaire becomes a pauper. The very round cities and towns become depopulated. Great, ugly buildings stand idle and untenanted while dust accumulates sepon the windows.

But the farmer purflies the even tenor of his ways, untouched by the delivium of booms. He ploughs and sows, and reaps the wherewithal to satisfy the human of

mankind. His, the most ancient and honourable calling—the tilling of mother Earth. When his season's tasks are ended and the soil's products safely garnered, his slumber is untroubled by haunting spectres. He has preyed on no man. He prospers by his own unaided effort, and, with the help of God, labours to make the soil yield abundantly. His children grow up as proper men and women should, ever in the presence of nature and removed from the unhealthy, artificial haunts and slums of men. They become the backbone and trusty sheet anchor of great nations. Statesmen, divines, scientists, captains of finance and industry spring from their ranks. Robust and vigorous, they add a life-giving leaven to the

decaying human product of the town.

But mother nature can frown as well as smile upon the efforts of the husbandman. Drouth, the arch-enemy of the farmer, may visit the land. Locusts and other plagues may prey on his broad acres. At first, he bows his head in dejection and submission. But the fighting spirit prevails. Through the painful process of experience and failure he gradually learns how to foil the dire calamities that beset him from time to time. Yes, life on the soil is a battle royal and victory crowns the efforts of the undounted. Each lonely homestead has its own tale of remance, comedy aye, and of tragedy. The conglest of the wilderness is man's work. It leaves in its wake the jetsam and flotsam of many wrecked hopes and ambitions. But it is all in a day's work. Where men fail ingloriously, others come and take up the unfinished tasks. And even the human failure contributes his bit, pitifully small though it may be. This process of laboriously piling up one flawless stone securely and snugly upon the other achieves, in God's good time, the completion of the edifice of civilization. Such is the making of a new country.



## THE TREK



#### CHAPTER ONE

EALLY, Dick, you are unreasonable. And I don't think I am the least bit sophisticated." Then, by way of explanation, "This beastly war has, I suppose brought us all down to fundamentals and perhaps I expressed myself a trifle candidly, but, honestly, lean't help thinking that you are unwilling to put your.

self in my place."

The speaker, a young girl dressed in the regulation khaki uniform of the auxiliary services, was seated on the lawr in front of one of those beautiful country houses which were England's glory before the aftermath of the titanic clash of arms in Europe had laid its heavy hand on British agriculture. She was uncommonly good to look upon. Nineteen years of age, apparenty blessed with radiant health, rosy complexion, full bosom and clear eye. She presented a pleasant and striking picture

Her companion, squatting on the grass facing her, also bore the King's uniform. He was somewhat rugged of feature, tall and broad-shouldered, with the indefinable air and bearing of a gentleman. He looked as if he might have beheld the sterner side of life without, however, showing any evidence of the seats and seams such experiences so frequently leave behind. His face bespoke a gentle character, but the strong chin indi-

cated quiet determination:

don't think I am at all unreasonable, but I do hate to hear you talk with all the worldly wisdom of a woman of forty. Of course I realise, I cannot offer you very much to begin with but I have life before me."

After a brief pause, he added; disconsolately: "But you don't seem to have any faith whatever in me."

"Not so fast, young man," interrupted Edith, smilingly, "Tido believe you will succeed and I don't mean to be frivolous, but, really, Dick, I just can't rush into an engagement with you in this off-hand fashion. I have others to consider, as you ought to know."

"Edith dear, ever since I was a boy you have occupied every nook and corner of my heart, and I simply can't think of the future without you. You do love me a little, Edith, do you not?" inquired Dick, anxiously. "Don't send me away without a ray of hope. But if there is none," he continued, slowly, leaning forward in tense expectation, "if you are sure of it, for God's sake tall me and put an end to this infernal torture of doubt and uncertainty. I can't stand it much longer!"

"Dear old Dick, sometimes I almost think I do love you. Of course, you know I am fond of you and always have been. But," she added, reflectively, "how can a girl know whether she actually loves a man she has played about with heedlessly most of her life? I miss you when you are not here and; somehow, I really think I should hate to see you marry someone else and cease to be the good old pal you have always been. But is that love? Or will someone else come along, out of the blue sky, some fine day and carry me completely off my feet?"

Don't even suggest such a possibility, Edith. The mere thought of it would haunt me day and might

"I do wish I knew what to tell you. Dick "returned Edith, miserably. "And when I think of your poor foot, all bruised and cut up, my first impulse is to go and marry you on the very spot. But, she added, with a crooked little smile, "you fell me yourself that we couldn't do that, so what's the use?"

"Not much, I am afraid," conceded Dick, listlessly.
"Let us just leave things as they are, Dick, such hope that in a little time the way may seem clearer. I promise you faithfully, when I feel certain of myself I shall let you know, unless," she added playitals.

"you have, in the meanwhile, married some other fas-

cinating female."

"Well," Dick replied, slowly, "I shall not urge you any more and will try to be satisfied with small mercies. But you did out me to the quick when you suggested. in so many words, that your chief consideration in life was money and comfort and clothes and all the rest of it. You know, Edith, that sort of cold-blooded sentiment wasn't a bit like the little girl I used to know. In lact, added Dick, emphatically, "that argument left a damned bad taste in my mouth.

"And yet, why should I pretend that those things don't influence my mind?" contended Edith, with spirit "If you were able to marry at this moment and could offer me even a modest establishment my answer might be different. Mind you, I don't say that it would." Then after a pause, and evidently by way of apology, "You know as well as I do, Dick, that Aunt Selina is a very matter of fact old lady and I simply couldn't have dived with her practically all my life without absorbing some of her cynical and worldly-wise viewa."

1 understand, little woman, and I give your resproted Aunti Salina full credit for my present plight. But farming in Canada im't quite such a dreadful bife as you seem to micture it. On the whole, we have a wally good time out there although of course, I can't pretend that everyone would see its attractions."

well, Dick, perhaps I am older than my actual years and much too hard headed for a gul of suscience. Fire it say way you like but to be perfectly frank with you. I can't quite see myself burdened with all the breatly forward drudgery of a small prairie farm in the wilder of Western Canada. That is ahe added dreamly suniant my devotion to you really amounted to an absolute passion. Than deliberately, but with a disarroing little smile. But as I have told you Disk, pres and over again, while I like and admire yen, I

#### The Fruits of the Earth

really am not conscious of your inspiring me with any

such exalted feeling."

Dick, quite naturally, did not look entirely satisfied. The sting, however, had been partly removed by the confession that she might actually make the sacrifice under the stress of a great affection. But Dick's conscience smote him. Try as he would, he could not avoid the uncomfortable conclusion that his impetuous proposal actually did suggest an almost impossible sacrifice. Here was a girl brought up in a furnious country home, with servents to cater to her smallest wants, and apparently without a material care in the world. Could he even though she were willing deliberately permit her to face the crude life of a pioneer farmer's wife? It seemed unthinkable!

He visualized the bent forms, bony frames and work-roughened hands of many of the women in the little prairie settlement he had left behind when be, answering the call of duty, left the shores of Canada with the Second Contingent. No, concluded Dick, he must act like a man. He must trust to the future to smooth out the path and, in the meanwhile, hope that the opportunity to succeed and win would not be danied him. They were both young. He was just over twenty-three. Somehow, some way, he must carve out a place for himself, which he could honourably sale her to share when the time came. Decidedly, he had been daminably selfish to endeavour to force the issue in his present circumstances.

"Edith, I might as well confess," said Pick stowly, "that you are entirely right and, what makes it wosse is, that I know it even better than you do I am

afraid I cut a sorry figure in your eyes?"

"Oh, Dick dear, I won't allow you to make thourself," cried Edith, generously. "I am, really and truly, fond of you. But let us leave things as they are for the present! Perhaps I may yet see things differently.

and in the meanwhile," she added, with a twinkle in her eye, "I shall try ever so hard not to fall head over heels in love with someone else."

"All right, old girl, we will leave it at that for the

present."

"Really Dick," continued Edith, obeying an impulse to justify herself. "I am not quite as mersenary as you may think, but this doting aunt of mine would simply lie down and die if I should commit any such faux pas as to marry a struggling colonial farmer. The dear old thing you know has her mind firmly fixed upon a brilliant alliance with some impossibly eligible man."

"Bad luck to him, whoever he is," commented Dick. and has, after all, been more than a mother to me. I simply could not bring myself to becloud her declining years with such a devastating disappointment," And, by way of dismissing the subject, "When are you going

back or are you really going back to Canada?"

"I am going up to London to-morrow and expect to be invalided out of the service. I don't see that I can do much good at the front with this infernal game foot of mine. I honestly haven't been able to make up my mind what my next move shall be. In fact, your rooted objection to a prairie farm must, of course, influence my decision. You see," he added, jocularly,

"I have not given up hope altogether."

"Dick that farm of yours in Canada may in the and, be murequestal to the cause than your war services. You must not think of me or of the future. You are perfectly able to run a farm in spite of your game foot. as you call it. Of course, I shall hate to have you go away again dear ! Then after a pause: But I know it is better for you and perhaps better for the: We are going to part as friends, are we not, Dick!" the de-

You are a brick old gut If I only had half your

sense I should be a millionaire by this time and carry you off in spite of yourself. But, seriously, continued Dick, "you have really helped me make my immediate future clear. Of course, I must join the army of the land'. Besides, I might as well be there as drifting aimlessly around in England gobbling up food that others need."

"Well, if I know you, as I think I do you are not going to drift around aimlessly anywhere," replied Edith with conviction. "You know, I really expect great things from you. Somehow, you have always struck me as so very dependable and industrious and, aside from your foolish infatuation for me, as a fellow with uncommon good sense. It does seem ridiculous. I suppose, but, do you know, Dick, I actually feel years older than you."

"Of course, I feel highly complimented on your maternal interest. Needless to say, I shall endeayour to earn your continued approbation," replied Dick with mock gravity. "What are you doing in London just

now. Edith?"

"Driving a brass hat. A queer old boy but I quite like him. He tries hard to be fierce and gruff, but I have a sneaking suspicion that if he were not so dreadfully preoccupied, he would often squeeze my hand and chuck me under the chin. My last ordion was much too gallant to be comfortable confident as much too gallant to be comfortable confident. Two or three of us have joined in a little flat and we contrive to amuse ourselves in a perfectly scandalously independent manner when off dutys. But what along this colonial estate of yours? Are you near any decemp people?"

"It all depends on what the term decemp millies.

"It all depends on what the term decent implies. If you mean society people or snything of that sor. I am not, although there are one or two rainest families in our neighbourhood." But with only a few possible exceptions, my neighbours, while perhaps rather tanks and ready, are simply the very salt of the earth. They

are mostly Eastern Canadians of British descent, with a sprinkling of Americans and native Britishess. There is also a Scandinavian family. Very hard-working people and good farmers.

But, Dick, tell me something about this farm of yours. I have somehow gathered the impression that you were a bit disappointed in it all. Do you really

see any worth-while future ahead of you?

"It all depends on the point of view. I often have my doubts about it. The year the war broke out was very disastrous to all of us, but my neighbour, who is cropping the little land I had contrived to break up, tells me that the following was a splendid year. Wheat is away up in price now and with any sort of luck one should do wall enough. The few cattle I have are also giving a good account of themselves just now. Of course, it is largely a matter of capital, and there I am hampered. But I simply love the life," declared Dick, warning up to his subject, "and when I see how comfortably some of my neighbours have their homes fixed up, I capit for the life of me see why one should not be perfectly shappy, and contented out there. But, of course, it has its limitations," he added, reflectively. "It is not for instance, the road to great wealth."

The terror quite the point, Dick. The question is,

jected Edith, with a flush

(Well, I do and I don't. Perhaps I am abbutten contents to the Well I had sufficient capital to carry out my planes. Utink I should contemplate the future with reasonable confidence. I could certainly become and landed proprietor of sorts, with a countertable home and a decent manus, which might perhaps the to 17072 sound should by trip across the pend, but judged by your standards the life would, of course still be severely restored. One could not, for instance, run over to Loudon for the season. The fact of the matter as it

suppose," added Dick, reflectively, "that the standards of life over there are so different from ours here, that

comparisons are quite futile."

"All that is fairly obvious, Dick. I am not quite foolish enough to suppose that a London season is one of the prime necessities of life. Of course, it is very pleasant and very desirable. But I do think you are wise to go back and take up the task where you left off. Have you talked the matter over with your father?"

"I opened up the subject the day I returned and found the dear old Dad rather mysterious, replied Dick, smilingly. "I noticed a young cartload of books and pamphlets on Canada and farming lying around in his library and gathered that he is busily engaged on one of his famous investigations. I shall certainly discuss the future with him. Notwithstanding his weakness for theory and statistics, I really do think that his judgment is uncommonly sound."

"I think he is absolutely one of the most delightful persons I know and I rather suspect that your family doesn't give him half the credit he deserves for good sense. I should take him fully into my confidence. Dick."

"Look here, Edith, in good Canadian slang, youthave me 'guessing'. Next thing, you will propose to be a mother to me. One moment words of wisdom fall from your lips and the next you seem entitle wrapt up in the all-important question of society and dress and the fleshpots of Egypt."

"No, Dick, you do me an injustice. I am fasticions. I know, but I cannot obliterate my early environment over night. I suppose, you are trying to poke fun at my hesitation to rush madly to Western Ganada with you, and attribute it solely to my shrinking from the primitive life there. There is much more involved than that. My duty towards my sunt my undefined personal feelings towards you, and, finally the thought that I should not fit into a place there!

"I can't imagine any place where you wouldn't fit

"Besides, to be truthful, a successful colonial farmer has not exactly been my ideal of a husband so far," continued Edith, deliberately. "While I have no vulgar ambition for mere wealth, our people have played their part in national affairs and my whole being just rises in rebellion against the thought of casting my life into a rise that would apparently lead nowhere. I am sorry, Dick, if you are disappointed in me," added Edith, impulsively. Then, after a pause, "I am afraid I have offended you, dear old Dick, but I shall hold to our hargains. "If I change my mind you shall know it."

'Dear little pal, don't worry over me. I quite understand. You almost instil all your ambition into me. I shall go forth to conquer the world and who knows what one might not accomplish with such a very desirable oruse at the goal?" he ended gaily.

Edith area and they silently sauntered towards the house. At the door, Dick took his leave, with unusual formality, and proceeded on his way home. He was desply disappointed, although he frankly admitted to himself that he had no rescut to pale ever since their result. They had been the best of pale ever since their childhood days, but this platonic attachment had falled to satisfy Dick. Edith's mind was apparently still in a state of flux on the subject of their future relationship. Of hourse, he was in any event, in no position to many. He had not even mesonable prospects to plew.

promptly regardered a soloma voy, that sa long as Edithnia no History may one also, he would still oling to his obtained dream of winning her for himself. This brave determination braced him up wonderfully, and he finally, resulted home in a somparatively optimistic transact mind.

HE "SAGE" was leaning back in his comfortable library chair, Mrs. Anstruthers was busy with her knitting and Mary, the only daughter, divided her attention between the conversation and a half-finished woolen helmet. Dick was looking reflectively and appraisingly at his father. He was evidently confronted with a perplexing problem.

"You know, Governor, I simply hate to take the responsibility of falling in with your plan, don't believe you half realise the tremendous upheaval such a move would make in your daily habits and in everything that now holds your interest. And then, what about Mother and Mary? Are they going to be satisfied and happy away from their friends and from all that now makes life worth living for them?

"Well, my boy," interrupted Mrs. Anstruthers, "It almost seems as if beggars can't be checkers. As far as I am concerned, it matters very little when it is long as I am with my husband and children. hear case is, of course, a little different. She must decide for herself and we must give careful thought to her

wishes."

"Mother, darling, please forgot, all stoom me of course, I am not keen to leave all my friends here four I can surely adapt myself to any new conditions we may have to face as thousands of other wires have much In many ways the idea rather appeals to me. No. added reflectively, "if I felt half as convenced to ability to adjust himself to this move and to the may own, I should have no hesitation about its and methodically and methodically

lighted his pipe, which apparently had a habit a going out at frequent intervals. He was in the secured of smoking more matches than tobacco. He may followed the conversation with a quizzical smile, but with un-To the same

flagging interest.

It would appear that I am to be regarded as the chief stumbling block to my own carefully considered. plan, he observed, after a pause, vigourously puffing away at his pipe. "Of course, I much appreciate all this tender solicitude in my behalf on the part of my very dearly beloved children. It almost makes me feel that I quebt to have a pillow behind my back and a dish of milk toest for dinner, when as a matter of fact, I appear to have a very healthy normal appetite for a man of my age and entertain a decided preference for sitting

up straight in my phair.

"No. father," said his son, "you quite misunderstand my hesitation to agree to your proposal is I have no doubts wistever, with your notorious obecasion for willian and racdening that you are quite at physically to cope with anything on the prairies that you are likely to have to encounter. I am thinking entirely. of your real life hers. Your interest in centered in your library and your publications and in your abatruse discussions with kindred spirits. You simply couldn't live in the painfolly material atmosphere in Western Canada and and use the sense of men who think of little beyond the process of beel and wheat and the prospective yald per some. You cannot truthfully say that you believe mappy in such an environment. Come

now contests to the state of th agriculture or farming in Western Canada, het trees this project of mine began to trystallize in my head, I have formers bed to take an interest, an intelligent one. I hope in the apparently numerous problems study to the complete many likewa communicated with various exemples instructions on Western Canada, which have 30

most courtequaly, sent me a mass of technical publications published by them from time to time I have spent practically all my time the last couple of months in analysing and digesting these treatises and really, Dick, I am fascinated. I am absolutely amased at the consuming desire that has grasped my mind to study all these absorbingly interesting questions on the ground."

"But, dear old Governor, you almost make me smile! Our problems out there are all of such a severely practical nature. Why, you would hardly know the difference between wheat and oats if you saw them in the field. I am not trying to discourage you, but you must see for yourself that you would be absolutely lost in this projected new field of yours.

"Well, then," replied the Sage, calmly, "we will not discuss that side of the proposal but will centre our attention on the economic aspect of the situation. As you know, I have a small pension from the Civil Service a couple of hundred pounds per amount also had investments that brought me in roundly another four hundred. Living as carefully as we have donethanks to your mother—I have been able to educate you children. But some of my capital has been used up in the process. Taxation has been enormously. increased, and one or two of my very best revenue producing investments have ceased to yield any return.

I could realise perhaps £4000 at present raines and still have my pension and a little nest egg laid by for your mother and sister. My proposal in restrict this money in your farming enterprise. Does it strike you as a sound and fairly safe venture. For the mament we will leave the domestic phase of the arrangement for further consideration."

ther consideration."
"Father," Dick replied mentatingly do you quite realize the responsibility an affirmative answer to solves? How can I say whether such a venture would be printent or not? The farmer's success depends so completely on

wind and weather and markets, over which he has absolutely no control whatever. I simply can't give

you the answer you apparently want."

"Granted all that, and those elements of uncertainty must, of course, enter into farming operations everywhere, but human records surely show, it should, in fact, be susceptible to positive, statistical proof, whather over any period of years such an investment would be remunerative and safe."

but your premous records really prove nothing. Of course, I can tell you our yield per acre of field crops over any period of years, but there is no data available to show how many farms were well managed and how many were headed for certain disaster irrespective of seasons and markets. Farming dear old Governor, is so intensely practical an undertaking, so much depends upon the man behind the plough, that one can only generalize on the subject."

Very well, my boy, we have now reduced the problem to the personal element. What about the man beand the plough in this case! I know he is depends ble and willing. Is he capable? Is he going to

be successful?

You are subling mean an inflar position; Pather-You are size, tempting me almost beyond endorance God knows that there is nothingfun the wide world. I make an much as success at this very moment. Yet I cannot be ensured on my brief record in the West'so justify mean expectations. I had just barely got well stelled for myself when the war broke out and changed everything. I worked hard and lived sconomically and; I think a last out my money tarrie was ly compared with what have seen other attentions do. You know Aun. Betty's legacy which was my entire capital, amounted to may a little over three thousand dolling by the stone is had paid my way out and bought my

I really don't think I have much to reproach myself with in regard to my investment, although I did make some mistakes. But with an additional ten thousand dollars it would almost seem as if I couldn't fail. But I simply can't take the responsibility of venturing almost the entire capital that you and Mother and Mary now depend on for a living. If we should go to the wall and you were all left stranded, I should

never forgive myself."

"Dick, old man, I love to hear you say that. It confirms my estimate of your character. I won't hide from you the fact that failure would be a pretty disastrous contingency under the circumstances. But the main point to consider is, what are the chances of success? Is there no way of eliminating this risk of failure? I have lost part of my capital now I may lose more. I may lose it all. It seems to me that an investment in land and live-stock in a new and growing country, such as yours, would contain a smaller risk than the average? paying investment available here. I may be quite wrong, but that is the way it looks to me."

"Theoretically, there is no flaw in your argument, father," replied Dick, thoughtfully, "but the fact re-

mains that many do fail."

"Granted. But why do they fail?"

"Unfavourable crop conditions are a fruitful source and the same of th

of failure."

But records show that the average crop production in the prairie provinces is quite satisfactory over a period of years. I have taken the trouble to look into that. The thing would be to go slow and be prepared for the worst. Surely that should be possible.

"Of course, it is. All you really risk is your expenses for the year, which can be controlled to a very large extent."

ALL THE PARTY OF T "Well, then, it looks to me as if you are not making a very convincing case for this inevitable, dire failure

that seems to agitate your mind so much. Your land and live-stock investment would, I suppose, always be intact?"

"That would, of course, depend on how it was bought. But I think I could at least fairly safeguard

"that with the experience I now have."

"Just as a matter of purely academic interest, how would you lay out this additional capital if you had it

available?"\_

That would need some very careful planning. But speaking off-hand, I should first pay up what I owe on my present half section, some fifteen hundred dollars. I should then probably want to buy the adjoining section, which belongs to an old couple in Winnipeg, and which I know can be purchased for fourteen dollars an acre, paying about half the price in cash and the balance over a term of years."

"Let me see," interrupted the Sage. "That would absorb about aix thousand dollars. I can see your capital vanishing at a somewhat rapid rate. However,

proceed with your imaginary spending campaign."

"There is a very decent set of buildings on this adjoining half, but if you and the family were to make your home there, we would have to spend at least a thousand dollars on the house to make it comfortable. I have enough cattle for a fair start now, but would need to buy another team of horses and some extra equipment. I could buy some of this on deferred payments, if necessary. We would need at least fifteen hundred dollars to part cover expenses for the first year. And, he added reflectively "that would not leave much margin for the luxuries either."

Three hundred pounds for expenses and living.

Dick Surely you are joking.

You see, Governor, I am talking in terms of prairie standards. The farm, of course, produces all its own milk, butter, eggs, poultry, vegetables, and some of the

meat. You can live mighty economically if you don't crave for the luxuries and are satisfied with plain food. There is no house rent to pay and taxes are nominal. Every-day clothes cost pretty much just what you want to spend. Of course, anyone who wants to cut a dash in town must do as the townsman do, which is pretty much as you would here at home. As I have tried to tell you, if you really want to economise on living out there, there is hardly any limit to what could be done in that line."

"Dick, you have succeeded in thoroughly arousing my interest in that country of yours. Why, boy, that little pension of mine would almost keep us in reasonable comfort on a farm even if everything else failed."

"You certainly wouldn't starve, Dad, if that is what you mean. But life here means more than three meals a day and a bed to all of you. You would find the isolation of the prairie irksome and monotonous, I am

afraid."

"My dear boy," interrupted his mother, "your father and I have talked this matter over time and again. It has made me very unhappy to think that you should make your home so far away from all of us and I had hoped that you might have settled down in England. But I am not going to urge you to do so. I quite see that the opportunities in that new country must be more attractive to a young man than what over-crowded England has to offer. As far as your father is concerned he is positively dying to go out there and renew his youth, and I firmly believe he will like it. Your sister has told you how she feels about it. So let us end this discussion and settle the matter once and for all."

"So this turns out to be a great family conspiracy," cried Dick, delightedly.

"I am afraid, old man, that you are hopelessly outvoted," replied his father. "We will now consider ways and means. You had better make tracks for Canada as soon as you can get rid of your military entanglement, and then proceed to carry out your plans and get the farm house made habitable. As soon as you say the word, we will pack our household gods and all our goods and belongings and join you. In the meanwhile I must run up to town and arrange to dispose of some of my securities and place ten thousand dollars to your credit. By the way, where do you do your banking in Canada, Dick?"

"But, my dear father, you almost take my breath away. I have been doing my little business with the Federal Bank, in Clearwater, but are there not some very essential business matters we must arrange before we proceed farther?"

"Yes, of course, I forgot about that. What would you suggest in regard to our proposed partnership?"

"Well, Sir, I would require some little time to think about that. I shall, of course, want to secure your capital to the greatest possible extent I can. The additional land and buildings must be placed in your name. That is clear. I can rent this from you on shares or for a stated sum annually and we can arrive at some equitable arrangement about the balance of the property. assume, you want me to take charge of the management. Of course, we can't have more than one boss, but you and I can talk things over from time to time. But I tell you what we will do. You have often heard me speak of my chum. Aleck Scott. Before the war he was riding for the Bar X people and we joined up together and have become rather friendly. We will ask Aleck to lunch the first day he can get leave from the hospital. I would like to have his opinion on the whole proposal."

"My dear boy, I can't be bothered with this tiresome detail. All I stipulate for is a quiet library and the run of the garden and to be left alone to go my own

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sweet way. You will not find me a nuisance, depend on that! But ask your friend down by all means."

Dick impetuously rushed across the room and enfolded his mother in his arms and thereupon grasped his father's hand, too utterly happy for words. His great chance had come.

#### CHAPTER THREE

THE ANSTRUTHERS were not people of any particular consequence. Of good stock of Irish extraction, and with modest financial resources, they had been able to wield sufficient social influence in days gone by to secure for the present head of the family an appointment in the Civil Service, and to ensure satisfactory promotion from time to time. But they had gradually drifted away from the more affluent and prominent members of their family and, upon Mr. Anstruther's retirement from the service, had settled down in the obscurity of a small town in Kent, where they had gradually surrounded themselves with a very limited circle of congenial friends whose circumstances

in life were largely similar to their own.

Mr. Anstruther had not, by any means, been a failure in life. His career had been entirely creditable, though not brilliant. Possibly he had not been fortunately placed early in life. He was a man with almost unlimited resources within himself and unusually independent of his surroundings. He would have contemplated life in the sleepy English town for the rest of his days with periedt equanimity. On the other Hand he was temperamentally capable of turning his back on his present congenial existence and venturing forth into the great world without a pang of regret. He was a man of great attainments in some directions. He was an inveferate seeker of information on somewhat varied subjects, but had never had any oppor-tunity to demonstrate his ability to apply such information to the practical every day problems of life; he was nevertheless, not devoid of a certain measure of shrewd common sense for which, however, only his most intimate friends and members of his family would ever give im eredit.

#### The Fruits of the Earth

His wife, the daughter of one of the higher officials in his department, had married him at an early age. She had been tremendously attached to this earnest, unassuming youngster. Her people had finally given a rather grudging consent to their engagement and marriage. She had never regretted a moment of their married life. Her husband had always been the courteous, considerate gentleman of the old school, self-sacrificing to a fault, and of marvelous equability of temper. Romance had not, perhaps, entered into their lives to any conspicuous degree, and Mr. Anstruther had ridden his hobbies in the privacy of his study. He was in some ways a creature of solitude—sufficient unto himself. But the garden, at least, they had enjoyed together, and she instinctively felt that, in spite of his apparent detachment, he depended upon her absolutely in a hundred ways.

Mary, the only daughter of the House of Anstruther. sometimes rebelled inwardly against the fate that had planted her in these torpid and humdrum surroundings. Full of animal vigour, she often entertained vague notions of cutting loose from it all and carving out a career for herself somewhere else. Without possessing outstanding beauty, she was a thoroughly wholesome and attractive little person. Dark hair, gray eyes, lovely complexion and an exceedingly neat and promising figure. She had evidently inherited her mother's flair for domestic management and was most capable and useful in their small establishment. She had a tremendous admiration for her father, but, on the occasions, found herself severely criticizing his apparent lack of ambition and complete resignation to their somewhat disappointing worldly state. She nursed a secret pride in her mother's ancestry and found it hard to comprehend her father's utter indifference to rank and tradition.

Dick, her brother, had been at school almost as far

back as she could remember, and aside from vacation times, she had seen very little of him. He had gone to Canada almost direct from his school. Edith Fane had always been his particular chum and there had been precious little time left for his sister when the aforesaid young lady was staying with her aunt at Edgerly Hall during Dick's holidays.

He was temperamentally, not unlike his father; but the latter, acting on some quite indefinable impulse or intuition, had shipped him off to Canada while yet a mere boy. Mr. Anstruther was perhaps vaguely conscious of the fact that he himself had not been an outstanding success from a material point of view, and he evidently intended that his boy should, at least,

have elbow room in his pursuit of a career.

Dick Anstruther was, fortunately, the sort of lad that could, with a certain degree of safety, be sent away from home to fend for himself. A school chum had an elder brother who had started farming in Alberta some years before. "He was communicated with and expressed his willingness to take the young cub in on the understanding that a suitable fee should be paid to cover his board and lodging for the first year. Dick duly arrived at the Fenwick's place, gorgeously attired in stocks, riding breeches and leggings. His first impression of his new surroundings was not exactly reassuring. The Fenwicks had greeted him with a great show of cordiality, but the slovenly appearance of the place conveyed even to Dick's inexperienced mind a certain amount of scepticism as to the ability of his new boss. or host, to impart to him the practical experience and knowledge he was in quest of. It may here be mentioned that this unfavourable impression was strengthened rather than removed as time went on.

Fenwick was an all too common type of young Englishman sent to the Colonies with a small amount of capital and a very modest annual income, but without any special training of any sort. He had married a girl of his own class, unused to the drudgery of housework. They were charming and expensively educated people and were exceedingly popular in the settlement. There was "no nonsense about them" according to the verdict of neighbouring farmers and their wives. They were the acknowledged leaders in all the sports and crude social events and were rightly regarded as a decided community asset. They always found time to undertake the preliminary details in connection with entertainments and sports, entered into such enterprises with unflagging enthusiasm, and showed considerable genius for that particular branch of organization.

But it must be recorded that he as a farmer, and she as a house-keeper, or rather as a house-worker, were complete and unmitigated failures. The critical observer might very properly ask how it shuld very well be otherwise, and candour would combel us to admit that the Fenwicks were indeed very severely handicapped in entering upon their farming career in Western Canada. One of their prosperous neighbours jocularly remarked that "as farmers they were bully tennis players". Fenwick was not lazy, but he frankly did not take to the dreary, back-breaking manual work around the farm, and his wife had long ago succumbed to the temptation of following the lines of least resistance in her house-keeping.

It was not easy for a woman of Mrs. Fenwick's temperament and early associations to strike a nice balance between that orderly and somewhat luxurous home in which her childhood had been spent and the crude living conditions that faced her upon arrival in western Canada. Her new surroundings obviously did not lend themselves to much of the household routine that had been part of her daily environment in England. Shining silver and immaculate linen were all very well

over there, where white-aproned maids and men servants with green baise aprons performed all the unpleasant and messy tasks incidental to the smoothly

running household and spotless home:

The great thing was to be practical. Everyone told her so. And, as years went by, it was astonishing to observe how Mrs. Fenwick succeeded in simplifying her household routine almost to the vanishing point by eliminating what she considered non-essentials. If she unconsciously touched the extreme, she is not very much to be blamed. At any rate Dick, new to the country, was shocked at the disorder and at the unsavoury appearance of the meals. Furthermore, he soon discovered that his mentor had a decidedly indifferent reputation in the neighbourhood as a farmer. He also ascertained the fact that a not inconsiderable part of the Fenwick revenue had in the past been derived from "pupils" like himself, who, it should be added, had generally done creditable work with the local polo team.

But Dick was anxious to get on. He was not satisfied to lawdle along with the Fenwicks. To cut a long story short he eventually secured a job with a backelor farmer in the district as an ordinary hired man, at the princely remuneration of ten dollars per month. It may here be mentioned that, under the new regime, Master Dick had no cause to complain of any lack of first hand, agricultural experience. His new boss introduced him to all the varied farm tasks with a region and promptness that fairly took Dick's breath away, and left him with an exceedingly sore back after

each day's task was done.

Fenwick acted with characteristic decency about it all and was in fact, unexpectedly apologetic. He now lies in transfers. His sort was the first to respond to the country's call. Mrs. Fenwick, poor soul, returned to England, and is now doubtless as fastidious as ever she was. Her brief Canadian experience seems to her now

like a bad dream. The gap the Fenwicks left in the settlement has never been filled.

Dick's new boss, a complete contrast to Fanwick, was not an unkindly man. He had the reputation of being a hard worker, a fact which Dick verified for himself in an incredibly short time. But he was patient and took infinite trouble to show the boy how to do things, and it is more than doubtful if Dick could have found a more efficient and painstaking teacher anywhere. Their household was of the bachelor variety, the food was cooked with the least possible preparation and the service was of a standard all its own. The premises, which were of the very simplest description, confined, in fact, to two bedrooms and one combined "aitting—dining-room—kitchen", were not exactly scrupulously clean, although the floor was religiously swept and the dishes washed and piled away after each meal.

Dick, like all very young men, and unlike the female of the species, was only finical on the surface, and very soon began to thoroughly enjoy this new, unconventional "Batching", to use the vernacular of the country, was simply "camping" to him. To get up in the morning, jump into a shirt and overalls and stick his head in a pail of water, after having lighted the kitchen stove and put the kettle on was a simplified existence with many attractive points. He was a strong, healthy boy of nineteen and the farm work soon became merely play to him. He was happy. He stayed a full year with the elderly bachelor and then decided to invest his small legacy in a farm of his own, He spent a couple of months looking over the country and finally bought out a homesteader lock, stock and barrel.

It was a proud day when all the arrangements had been completed and the vendor of the property had taken his departure, and Dick had become lord of half a section of land, with all the appuremances thereto. The previous owner, an American citizen, had found it necessary to return to his native state, and had been willing to make some ascrifice to secure a cash purchaser for the land.

Everything considered, Dick had not made a bad investment. The price of the land was decidedly below values prevailing in the district and the equipment had been bought for a mere song. Most of it, though decidedly the worse for wear, was still quite serviceable. The team, a fine upstanding pair of bays, was of useful weight and rising six years of age. There were ten head of cattle of all ages, amongst them three cows in milk and another coming in The sale also included a few pigs and poultry. The farm cat and a very handsome collie dog had been, generously, left behind. A few necessary articles of furniture and the cook stove also became Dick's.

After taking the ex-owner and his wife to the station, Dick lost no time in making himself comfortable. The two-room "shack" was just what he wanted. A larger house would have been a nuisance. Everything was clean according to male ideas, and Dick inwardly determined to try his best to maintain the same standard of neatness and cleanliness. He proceeded to unpack his boxes and bags and to dispose of his scanty supply of toilet articles and ornaments. A picture of Edith Fane, in a very expensive silver frame, was prominently displayed on the rude bureau, and family photographs were nailed upon the rough log walls.

It was great fun, this starting a home of his own. And the possibilities, inside and outside, seemed unlimited. A neat little kitchen garden in front, with a few flower borders, would simply change the whole appearance of the place. This must be attended to early next year. Then there was the live-stock to think about. Sufficient prairie hay had been put up for the winter, and Dick purchased enough grain feed to see

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him through for a year. The stable was well built and the sheds and corrals substantial and conveniently laid, out. There was a good well half way between the stable and the shack, where it would serve man as well

as beast. It was a snug little place.

Dick had been very much attracted by the district he had settled in. The soil was a rich, black loam. This was of paramount importance. To this west of his farm a magnificent range of blue-tinted hills, covered here and there with poplar groves, hid the setting sun the first evening he beheld them. The effect was magnificent. The clouds became enveloped in a bright golden wheat, and as the sun slowly disappeared, great rays of light ascended into the heavens. The bountry was park-like and pleasant to the eye. Windigo Creek, rising in the hills, crossed the lower part of his farm, which was located in a broad valley with gentle slopes upward on each side.

Cool in summer and well sheltered in winter it was a pleasant spot wherein to dwell. A triffe too close to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, it was not perhaps the pick of the wheat-producing country. But the few farmers located there had, nevertheless, been fairly successful growing wheat; and other advantages, in Dick's mind, more than made up for this possible deficiency. He was, in short, thoroughly satisfied with his selection, and, to tell the truth, had displayed very unusual judgment, considering his youth and limited knowledge of the country. Decidedly there was a good

level head on those young shoulders.

# CHAPTER FOUR

As DIGK was sitting in the London train, mechanically gasing out of the window, almost oblivious to the beautiful scenery through which he was passing, plans for the future were formulating in his mind. He would need to move cautiously. The great responsibility placed on him could not for a moment be disregarded. He had always taken for granted that his father's judgment in matters of business was apt to be fallible. It behooved him to see that, no matter how insignificant might be the returns of the proposed investment in his hands, the capital should be so placed that it could at least be realised on without considerable loss; in the event of his proving unequal to the task of

successfully managing the enterprise.

Dick ind telegraphed Edith that he would call at her flat early the same evening hoping to find her in, and would take her somewhere to dine. He was impatient to convey to her the good news of the future enlarged scope of his Canadian undertaking. He knew how delighted she would be with his brighter prospects and secretly entertained the hope that the changed situation high influence her mind in his favour. Following a busy afternoon at Canadian Military Headquarters, where matters were finally advanced to a point which admitted, of preparations for an early departure for Canadia, he called at Edith's temporary home and found her waiting for him. She was dead tired after a busy day, and had experienced some difficulty in getting the evening free.

take me out to some gay and happy place for dimer, where I can lean back in my chair, listen to southing much and let date to happy

"All right, old girl, I already have the precise spot

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located and took the precaution to secure a table earlier in the day. I want to have a good, old-fashioned chat with you to-night, Edith, which will probably be our last for some considerable time, as I expect to leave for Canada almost at any moment now. Get your things on and I will try and get a taxi. I will wait for you downstairs."

Edith lost no time in following instructions. a very satisfactory person Dick was, after all. His mere presence was soothing. He seemed so capable and dependable. What a pity his lot was cast in Western Canada amidst surroundings so absolutely uncongenial. What young woman of spirit could reconcile herself to a life of eternal dishwashing and mending on a small farm, entirely cut off from everything that makes life worth living? How long could the grand passion stand such a strain? She was not afraid of work. If dire necessity ever forced her to make ber own living, she flattered herself that she could do it cheerfully and efficiently. But she could not fathom the motive that would prompt an educated, refined woman to voluntarily dedicate her youth—and possibly her whole life-to hard, manual labour on a farm, remote from civilization and removed from all refining influences. If one had to do that sort of thing, why not stay in England and do it? Women were going into farm work in increasing numbers daily. Dick would be sure to reopen the great question to-night, and she just hated to appear selfish and unsympathetic. And yet, as long as she felt this aversion to life on the prairies, she could not honourably give him any encouragement. However, this was their last evening together for ever so long. She was going to cast cares to the wind. Dick was in no position to marry any way, or "sufficient unto the day" etc., etc.

Against expectations, Dick succeeded in getting a taxi and they were presently dashing through the

streets of London towards one of the imposing restaurants in the theatre district. On arrival the head waiter led them to a secluded table, and a thoroughly satisfactory dinner was presently served. Over the coffee and cigarettes, Dick unfolded his prospective plans.

"I think it is just splendid of you to take this on, and, of course, it might lead to anything with good luck. Dick, I don't quite see how your Mother and Mary will be able to reconcile themselves to this new life of yours," she added, hesitatingly. "Are you sure

that they quite realize all that is involved?"

"I am not sure of anything of the sort, Edith," replied Dick, with a touch of asperity. "Mary is old enough to know her own mind and I have absolutely refrained from persuading them one way or the other. In fact, I rather threw cold water on the whole project, but the Mater finally insisted, and, as far as I could judge, Mary is really looking forward to the new life, and Father has apparently quite made up his mind about it all, so what am I to do?"

"Dick dear, please be gentle with me this evening. My vanity is perhaps a little wounded when I consider how cheerfully the women of your family embark on this adventure, and how my mind is filled with misgivings and fear when I even think of such a life. Evidently I am not a good sport, and you had better forget all about me and find some girl who would not be a hindrance to your career."

"I think, little woman, that you have more real sense than any other girl I know. If I have any grievance it is that you have so much sense that your heart can't ever run away with your mind. But I am quite content to take my chances. Rest assured that I shall never ask you to come to me as a glorified slavie. All I hoped for was that you might believe in me and promise to marry me, that is, if you really love me."

makes me hesitate," interrupted Edith, "it is rather lack of confidence in myself. You must let me find myself, dear, before you press me too hard. I am feeling terribly depressed these days. Perhaps it is because you are leaving. I don't know. At any rate, you had better take me to some place where we can dance away our doubts and scruples and then get me safely home. I feel in a particularly reckless mood to-night."

After a hilarious evening, they arrived at the front door of the flat and Dick dismissed the taxi, intending to walk back to his hotel. The unaccustomed exercise had not apparently tired his injured foot as much as he expected. Perhaps he had partly forgotten it in the excitement of the evening. Edith had been very sweet about it and had insisted on sitting out most of the dances.

"This is good-bye, old girl. I doubt whether I shall be able to see you again before I sail. I have been warned that I shall have very brief notice of the sailing

of my boat."

"Dick dear, I have had a perfectly heavenly evening and I shall feel very lonely and forlorn without you. But I would rather not see you again. I seem to have lost my poise and if I stay here another minute I shall weep and make an exhibition of myself. . . . . Goodbye, dear old chum," she cried and impulsively put her arms around his neck and implanted a kiss on his cheek. Dick passionately enfolded her in his arms, his heart leaping with joy. In utter confusion she tore herself from his embrace and rushed up the stairs.

Brief as this moment of delight had been, he felt heartened. The spot where he stood was enchanted ground and his whole being was pervaded with the spell of her vivid individuality and irresistible charm. Dazed, with unseeing eyes, he stared for a moment at the door where she had disappeared and, with an effort,

pulled himself together and slowly and unwillingly

turned around and made his way homeward.

The following morning Dick, after visiting Aleck-Scott at the hospital and obtaining his reluctant consent to spend the following Sunday with them, took an early train for home. There was much to be done. It was no small matter this pulling a family up by the roots and transplanting it to a life so utterly different to anything they had hitherto known. What should be taken and what should be left behind in the hands of the auctioneers? What new things should be purchased and brought across the water? Long conferences with his capable mother would be needed. There would be some heartaches at parting with household gods which would only prove an incumbrance on the prairies.

Mrs. Anstruther had views of her own. She made it very clear to Dick that his bachelor ideas upon housefurnishing and decoration were not necessarily to be

final.

"I presume, my boy, that so far as our new home is concerned, it will not differ essentially from a home anywhere else. It may not have the comforts we are accustomed to here, and will probably be a bit cramped, but it will still be our home. I can see no reason why we should part with any of our pretty things. As I see it, we shall need them ever so much more there than we do here. The cruder four surroundings are, the more reason there is for doing everything in our power to make the house artistic and homelike."

That is a very sensible argument, Mater, but I amythinking of the work entailed in caring for all these things. Domestic help is not easy to obtain on the farms out there, and you and Mary should not deliberately set out to make life a burden to yourselves,"

replied Dick, smilingly.

"We will take our chances on that, Dick. I have been thinking very seriously of taking Martha with us.

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She has been in our service here for a good many years and, I believe, she would be overjoyed at the oppor-

tunity."

"Well," replied Dick, with a feeling of deep relief, "that seems very feasible. She is an elderly woman and will probably be quite happy out there. Of course, you must have help in the house, mother. I could not ask you and Mary to do all the drudgery of household work, although that, of course, is the general rule amongst the settlers in our district who cannot afford to pay the high wages now demanded by domestic help for country work. As a matter of fact, you have lifted a weight off my mind. I have been rather worried about this problem."

"I am glad to know that, my boy, but you need not take these details so seriously. I expect Mary and I would survive were we compelled to do all the work ourselves, but, as long as we can afford to do so, I propose to have help in my household. It will leave us freer to enjoy life out there, and I may as well tell you, that is precisely what I mean to do."

"Mother, you are altogether the most comforting and confidence-inspiring soul I know. Almost my only fear is, that you and Mary may not take to prairie existence, which would be a tremendous disappointment to me. I should feel that I had failed before we had even fairly started. However, I am going to make myself believe that we are all going to be happy and comfortable together."

"My dear boy, do dismiss these gloomy forebodings from your mind," replied Mrs. Anstruther. "My experience in life has long ago taught me that happiness and contentment are seldom products of external circumstances. If we decide to be happy and content in our little prairie home, presto! we are happy. That is all. I take it for granted, of course, that we are going to have enough to eat, drink and wear in moder-



Happiness could hardly be compatible with actual physical want. But we will not anticipate any calamity of that sort," she added with a smile.
"Mater, you are a brick, and I am sure you are

going to surprise us all. When the Governor broached his wonderful plan to me, I was absolutely panic-stricken. The thing seemed impossible. But your calm, commonsense reasoning has made me positively enthusiastic. Of course you are going to love it. We are all going to love it: I tell you, Mother," he added, earnestly, "you are going to be my inspiration and I shall not be satisfied with any half success. We are all going to pull together and found a home out there that we will be proud of."

"Yes, dear, you can safely count on me. You must regard the future fearlessly and we must all learn to work faithfully and intelligently towards the common end. I am ambitious for you two children, and am really anxious to get you both away from the overcrowded old land, where it seems almost impossible for one man to succeed except at the expense of another. It is also the right thing that those who can do so should get out and leave more opportunities for those

who cannot."

"Mother, you talk like an oracle," Dick ejaculated, approvingly. "I am afraid I never half realized how much wisdom is stored up in that little head of yours. But never fear, you will need it all and we will all draw on it to the limit. Seriously, dear, I am beginning to feel that you are really going to be my business partner. I just can't tell you how overjoyed I am to find that you are taking such a sensible and hopeful view of the whole project. Dear Mater," he exclaimed, while he folded here to his bosom and kissed her again and again, "no other fellow could possibly have such an absolutely perfect mother as you are."

Mrs. Anstruther was evidently deeply touched by

this spontaneous outburst of affection on Dick's part. He had never been a demonstrative boy and she had sometimes thought that he lacked affection. It augured well for the future that this forthcoming change in their lives should bring them closer together than anything else had had the power to do during his early manhood. She now saw clearly her opportunity to help Dick. He would need encouragement when he encountered disappointment in his path, which was bound to happen. And merely to be with her boy every day was worth many times over any sacrifice she would be called upon to make in leaving England. She recognized her allotted task in their new scheme of life and inwardly decided to play a real mother's part.

There was another family conference in the library the same evening, the Sage in the chair. Dick might leave at any moment, and there was much to discuss

and many arrangemenst to make.

"As we now have decided to clear out of England, I might as well tell you, Dick, that we shall feel restless and unsettled, so I vote we actually make the move as soon as practicable. There is nothing special to keep us here that I can see. The question, therefore, is, when can you get ready for us? And do you actually know you can buy the place you have in mind," demanded Mr. Anstruther.

"I am as certain as I can be of anything that I can buy that place," answered Dick. "I know the people who own it. They are a queer old couple and will only sell against a considerable proportion of cash, and that at once restricts competition. In fact, the way things are in Alberta just now, there is not a chance in a thousand that this place has been sold."

"What sort of a house goes with this farm, Dick,"

asked the Sage.

"The dwelling on the property was built by an affluent newcomer. Ill-natured gossips used to say

that he had more money than brains. At any rate, it was a nine-days' wonder out there. It is a very nice looking two storey house. I think there are four bedrooms upstairs and a smaller room intended for a bathroom, which, however, was never finished. There is, I know, a good-sized kitchen, what we call a 'lean-to', a very large living room and a small den; there is also some room in the attic. A wide verandah runs along the entire south side of the house. It has been unoccupied for several years, but doors and windows have been securely boarded up, so the inside should be in fair condition."

"That," replied the Sage, "sounds positively palatial to me."

"It looks it, too; at least, by comparison. In fact," added Dick, "the settlers always jokingly refer to this house as the 'castle'. The land adjoins mine and I have given a certain amount of oversight to the property and know it well. The present owners held a first mortgage and when the ambitious ex-owner finally came a cropper, as everyone predicted he would, the mortgage was foreclosed. I should estimate that the house and outbuildings cost pretty nearly as much as the whole property can now be bought for:"

why did everyone predict that this imfortunate chap was bound to fail," asked the Sage

It was before my time, father, but I expect he bore all the earmarks of the predestined failure. He probably soorned advice, labouring under the hallucintion that everybody wanted to take advantage of him. Or he may have been entirely reckless in his investments. For instance, the mere building of such a house and ninking the larger part of his working capital in it was a terrible blunder. I think everyone in the settlement was sorry for him, and certainly for his wife and

children. He was evidently a misfit and was, in all probability, a misfit before he came to Canada."

"Yes, that is in all likelihood true, Dick," conceded Mr. Anstruther. "I trust you have profited by this and other horrible examples and won't run us all into the poor house."

"I hope not, Governor. In fact, I am beginning to suspect that I will probably be the one to apply the brakes on the ambitious plans of the rest of the family," replied Dick with mock severity.

"Of course, Dick, I am not in the least apprehensive and don't mind carrying on from the point where the last unfortunate owner left off. It is common knowledge that a very large proportion of men the world over fail in business. I suppose all that can be said for a new country is that the proportion of failures is smaller there, presumably owing to the fact that it requires a lower minimum degree of business ability and energy to succeed on account of the greater opportunities."

"There is something in that, father, but even so we have quite a sufficient number of failures on the land," replied Dick.

"Which may be partly due to our best men remaining at home and too large a proportion of our ne'er-do-wells being shipped off to the colonies," interrupted the Sage.

"There can be no argument against that theory. Perfectly helpless boys, without any useful training of any sort, reach Canada almost daily, or did before the war. I have often thought that a year's course in some practical training school would salvage a lot of this useful human material. Our nation has the reputation of having reduced colonising to a science. I must confess, however, that I have seen very little evidence of any forethought or intelligent planning in this direction. If we do succeed, as I suppose we do, it is surely

rather by reason of good luck than by virtue of good-management."

"It may be the Anglo-Saxon faculty of adaptability," suggested Mr. Anstruther. "But interesting as this point may be, we are rather drifting away from our own immediate problem."

"Agreed, agreed," cried Mary and Mrs. Anstruther in unison. "I propose we adjourn for a cup of tea and resume our discussion later," volunteered Mary.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

LECK SCOTT, shell shock patient, was sitting on the edge of his narrow hospital cot, staring out of the window, evidently lost in thought. Past events floated in rapid review before his mind's eye. It all came back to him as clearly as if it had happened yesterday. It was the great day of the race meet. The gentlemen's steeplechase was to be run. were a dozen starters. Aleck amongst them, mounted on the big black mare he had recently purchased. The flag dropped and they were off. It was a glorious race and made a fitting finale to the day's events. Aleck rode like one possessed and cleared every obstacle with ease. He had made no mistake in his purchase. The black mare reached the post well in advance of all the other competitors, many of whom were absent at the finish. Amid the wild applause of the spectators he received the handsome challenge cup and finally surrendered his mount to the groom and prepared to receive the enthusiastic congratulations of his numerous friends. It was the proudest moment of his life.

Some days afterwards he had received a curt note demanding his presence before the racing committee, which had in the meanwhile received a protest from a disappointed competitor, who had finished a bad second, alleging that Aleck's horse had been entered under a false name and had, in fact, a not too savour racing career to her credit. Aleck had backed the mare heavily and the betting had been furious. It could not be proven that the previous owner had personally placed any bets on the race. Confronted with the evidence, he had confessed under pressure and had implicated Aleck to save himself more serious consequences. He maintained that the mare had been sold under her

proper name and that Aleck was responsible for the

fraud perpetrated upon the public.

Before the Committee Aleck had furiously protested his entire ignorance of the whole affair, and had, to further complicate matters, completely lost his temper. The seller of the mare had been equally emphatic in his denial of any share in the fraud, except to the extent of failing to bring the matter to the attention of the stewards prior to the race. It was an ugly situation. Aleck's involved finances were common property at the . time and circumstantial evidence pointed to him unerringly as the culprit. He surrendered the trophy and after several sessions with the investigating committee, left their presence a branded man, ruined financially and socially...

Some of his erstwhile friends openly shunned him, while others were in a mood to forgive him on account of his youth. Resignation from his clubs followed. His family, already scandalized by his reckless mode of living and gambling proclivities, had maintained a frosty silence. Poor Aleck was in the deepest depths of despair, smarting under the injury of a wrongful conviction. Not a soul came to the rescue in his behalf. To tell the truth, no one had much opportunity to help him, because some days after the verdict had been pronounced placing him definitely beyond the pale, he silently sold all his goods and belongings and sailed for Canada, landing there with the remnants of his inheritance, which, by that time, had been reduced to the vanishing point.

Aleck had received a joit. He had been brought up with a sudden turn. Whether for better or for worse was now to be determined. He went to a cheap hotel and commenced looking for work with unusual energy. He finally landed a job with the "Bar X" ranch, a small cattle concern south of Calgary. Aleck had definitely left his old life behind him and quickly ad-



justed himself to first principles. If he would eat, he must work. The sensation of being, for the first time in his career, thrown entirely upon his own resources, was not without its compensating advantages. He developed a degree of self reliance and adaptability which presently inspired him with confidence, and he found, much to his surprise and gratification, that his boss was beginning to rely upon him more and more and steadily increased his monthly wage. By the time war broke out, Aleck was acting as a sort of foreman on the ranch and had been completely initiated into all the mysteries of the cattle business.

And then the seemingly impossible had happened. While in hospital recovering from slight physical injuries, the Tommy with the bandaged head, lying in the cot next to his, one day addressed him by name.

"Do you remember me, Sir?" he had asked.

Aleck did not.

"I am the groom you took over with that black mare you rode in the steeplechase some years ago. You know, the race there was all the bother about."

Aleck had only employed the man for a few weeks and probably would not have identified him with his fellow patient. The announcement gave him a distinct shock. He nodded his head and remained silent.

"You know, Sir, I was partly to blame for all that happened, and I have never had a happy moment since. I tried to find your address once, but no one could tell me where you were. But," he added, "it seems as if I have now been given the opportunity to set matters right, thank God for that."

"Yes, by all means, thank God for it," replied Aleck, bitterly. "And, I suppose I should thank God; too, for having been an outcast for years in order that fellows like you might make a little easy money. Well, I hope you enjoyed it. As far as restitution is concerned,

I don't care a damn for your belated repentance. It is useless to me now."

"Mr. Scott, Sir, don't say that. I was only a young stable lad and my employer tempted me to keep

my mouth shut about it all."

"Well, old man, let us say nothing more about it," said Aleck, who began to feel sorry for the poor wretch. "When you are better, you can commit the whole story to paper, if that will be any relief to you. It

might be of sérvice to me some day."

But that night his ex-groom took a decided turn for the worse and lapsed into a delirious condition in which he still remained when, some days afterwards, Aleck was transferred to England for special treatment. He casually left his address with the nurse, in case the patient railied and should insist upon communicating with him.

Aleck had been singularly indifferent to the possibility of redeeming his lost reputation and character. The past had been a closed book to him. But on reflection, he realized that his family had perhaps suffered equally with himself. His aunt and his cousins must have been deeply mortified at the turn events had taken. And his uncle on his mother's side, Mr. Houghton, for whom he had always had a weak spot in his heart, and who had consistently taken a sympathetic view of his early escapades, would undoubtedly be delighted if he should ever be able to clear himself of the disreputable act of which he had been convicted. Aleck began to regret the off-hand attitude he had chosen to adopt towards the man who perhaps had it in his power to re-establish his lost reputation.

The following Sunday, having obtained leave, he proceeded to pay his promised visit to the Anstruthers. He was met at the station by Dick, and upon arrival at the house was duly introduced to the family. Canada, being uppermost in the minds of all, and Aleck being

regarded as an "old timer", he was liberally plied with questions about the country and its possibilities, and the whole plan of the Anstruther family exodus to the Promised Land was unfolded to him. Aleck, while sympathetic, was not entirely enthusiastic. He had seen too many failures on the part of people just like the Anstruthers, but admitted that in their peculiar circumstances, and with Dick having had experience in the country, the scheme looked feasible enough.

"Where is the ranch you are managing, Mr. Scott,"

asked Mrs. Anstruther.

"The 'Bar X' is about forty miles south of Dick's place; but I am not managing that property. I am

inst an ordinary cow-hand there."

"Of course. Mater," interjected Dick, "you must not run away with the idea that a man working on a ranch in Canada is quite in the same category as the agricultural labourer here. We all have to go through the mill before we gain sufficient experience to start for ourselves."

"For my part," volunteered Mary, "I think it is perfectly splendid of you men to buckle down to ordinary labouring work in that country and do your share

of real pioneering."

"Well, Miss Mary," drawled Aleck, 'I am afraid there is nothing very heroic about tumbling out of bed hours before daylight on winter mornings, and getting chores done in time to get into the saddle immediately after breakfast and possibly face a bad storm most of the day. I often think it is a dog's life. But it is all in a day's work, and as I have to make my living I can't afford to be too particular."

"Would you sooner remain in England?" asked Mary.
"I am airaid I couldn't get anybody to dopt me,"

replied Aleck.

"But surely your friends could get you something to do."

"I have no friends, Miss Mary," said Aleck curtly. "If I had, I certainly could not be beholden to them for my bed and meals. I am quite happy where I am and have not the slightest wish to settle down in England again."

Mary instinctively felt that she had trespassed upon forbidden ground. There seemed to be a halo of mystery surrounding this somewhat cynical individual which vaguely interested her. She made up her mind to ask Dick about him when they were alone. He would surely know his past history. Evidently he was a man of education. He bore all the earmarks of the public school boyk and his manners were faultless. Dick, however, questioned afterwards, proved an unsatisfactory informant. He knew little more about Aleck than was apparent on the surface.

The Sage was more successful in drawing Aleck out. He presently told them all about his struggles when he first arrived in Canada and his early months on the ranch when he was everybody's butt. How he had taken it all good-naturedly and finally had been admitted to the friendship of his fellow-workers on equal terms. Mr. Anstruther wanted to know about the cattle business and Aleck proved a veritable mine of

information on the subject.

Shortly before lunch, Aleck left for the station to take his train back to London. He had been charmed with the Anstruther home circle and secretly thought Dick a lucky dog. If he himself had been similarly situated, what a difference it might have made in his life.

His nerves were on edge. The doctor had warned him before he left, early in the morning, to avoid all excitement, and he had been fool enough to chatter all day long and answer all sorts of silly questions. What the devil did he care whether the Anstruthers went to Canada or not. It was an infernal nuisance to be dragged into other people's life problems. Good God, he

had plenty of his own to worry about. His fingers

twitched and worked incessantly.

War neurasthenia had him in its grip. He became frantic to get within the sheltering walls of the hospital again. What a fool he had been to go out into the world and meet his fellow men as a normal being. He was nothing but a mental wreck unable to control himself as a man should. Thank God, they were getting into London. On arrival at the station he rushed for a taxi and shouted to the chauffeur to drive like hell to the hospital where he arrived in an exhausted condition.

He threw himself on his cot and endeavoured, with a mighty effort, to get control of his shattered nerves. The nurse brought him a glass of warm milk and sat down by the bedside and finally succeeded in calming him down. There was no hospital leave for Aleck for some time after this.

The following morning he was better. He was thankful that he had not made a "fool of himself" before the Anstruthers. Dick was a prince. No doubt about that. And Mary was an uncommonly nice girl. He was glad to have been of some use to them, but would probably never come across them again. He certainly had no intention of accepting their repeated invitation to visit them after they got settled down in Canada.

Aleck had had several letters from his ex-employer urging him to come back to his old job as soon as he was able to travel and could get leave to return to Canada. But it was evident that he was not fit to face the world in his present condition. However, he made up his mind to try his level best to get a grip of himself again, and the doctor was very pleased with the progress he had made. He gritted his teeth and determined that he would fight his ghastly battle with himself and win out in the end.



#### CHAPTER SIX

HAT 'castle' of yours seems like a very suitable sort of an abode for this pampered family, Dick." said Mr. Anstruther. "Tell me, just what do you think should be done to it before we go into occu-

pation?"

"I thought that by spending about a thousand dollars we could make the house fairly habitable, but. after all, I am not so certain about that. Of course, it all depends on what we would regard as our minimum requirements in the way of comfort, Less than a thousand dollars will, I am sure, put the house in good order to the extent of re-papering and painting it, putting in a central heating system and adding a few little odds and ends that we should need. But there will be no sanitary conveniences or running water in the house. Now, just how do you feel about that?" demanded Dick.

The Sage looked at his wife, evidently expecting

her to answer the question.

"That would seem pretty awful, Dick, would it not?"

observed Mary.

"Well, Sis, the Lord knows that I don't want to blow in our entire capital on our living accommedation," replied Dick, "but, as you ask the question it really would seem pretty awful for you people to be deprived of the ordinary conveniences of civilization. It would, indeed.

"Of course, I don't understand about these things, but how can you have water works out on a prairie

farm," asked the Sage.

"Oh, there is no particular difficulty about that. We can have it there just as well as we have it in country houses in England. At least, the only problem is the financial one," replied Dick. "There are thousands

of farm houses in Western Canada equipped with all modern conveniences, including electric light. point is whether we can rise to the expense of it."

"This is really a very important matter," said Mrs. Anstruther, decidedly. "I confess I cannot quite picture life without these conveniences. But we are probably spoiled with comforts in this old land of ours. What would be involved in the way of expense, Dick." she asked.

"I am afraid I am a little vague on that point," he replied, "but I once stayed over night at a very nice farm in the south country where the owner had just installed complete bathroom fixtures, sink, pumping plant and all the rest of it. I became quite interested in this venture, having at that time visions of duplicating it on my own place when 'my ship came home'. If I am not mistaken, this farmer told me that the cost had been somewhere below a thousand dollars all told."

"If that is the case, all we really have to decide is whether we want these conveniences badly enough to spend a couple of hundred pounds on them. My opinion is that we do," observed Mrs. Anstruthers with decision.

"I absolutely agree with you, mother darling," ventured Mary. "I cannot imagine how this amount could possibly be spent to greater advantage.

"'Pon my word, Dick, I am afraid I cannot disagree with your mother and sister. After all, it would be simply ghastly to live in that primitive fashion. We should hate it after a while and want to work home. Of course, I had not considered all these things when we talked it over among ourselves, but I feel that any sacrifice is legitimate to enable us to add such necessary comforts to our new home."

"I expect, Dad, you will soon begin to understand why our prospective predecessor failed on his farm," replied Dick, secretly amused at the turn the conversa-



tion had taken. "He, in all probability, spent so much of his limited means on comforts for himself and his family that he had no adequate working capital left to produce the wherewithal to keep up his ambitious establishment. I should say off-hand that this is probably a correct diagnosis of his case. Are we going to make the same mistake?"

Dick's practical summing up of the argument acted

like a cold double on his family,

"But even if we postpone this expense, Dick, are you going to have enough working capital left to make the place profitable out of Dad's ten thousand dollars."

demanded Mary.

"Just barely enough and no more," replied Dick.
"We will have to get on the best way we can, but with any kind of decent seasons we will make ends meet. You see, our plant consists of our land and improvements. They are useless without working capital invested in equipment and live-stock, and a fair margin to cover running expenses for a season."

"Then any additional capital you had would make

much more than ordinary interest," asked Mary.

"Why, certainly," he replied, "the money we have available over and above our fixed investment, is what will produce the results. Without a certain margin of working capital, the other is simply a dead investment."

"It shink I understand," answered Mary, slowly. "It seems to me then that we should pool our resources.

We might as well all sink or swim together."

"I am perfectly willing we should swim together, old girl, but I draw the line at sinking. You know the old saw about putting all the eggs in one basket. The remainder of father's capital had better not be risked. If the worst should by any chance, happen, it would be rather a calamity to feel that all his resources had been dissipated."

Tam not thinking of father's capital, Dick. When

Aunt Betty left you the legacy you invested in Canada the dear old soul did not, as you know, forget me. I have about £800 in securities which brings me in a little under forty pounds a year. I rather feel like risking my little nest egg in the new family venture. That is, of course, if you think you could use it to advantage." she added.

"I couldn't think of it, Mary," contended Dick "I should never know a moment's peace emphatically. of mind if I felt that we had plunged to that extent

purely on the presumption of my success."

"That sounds rather silly to me. I would, of course, go into this with my eyes wide open and would expect to reap some advantage from the investment if we made the thing go. If we failed, I should, I suppose, have to take my medicine with the rest of you. fact, you could hardly expect me to take any violent fancy to this undertaking unless I had a real, personal interest in it. You have not forgotten what the Good Book says, 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'."

"It seems to me there is a good deal of sense in

Mary's argument," interrupted the Sage.
"On the whole, I think this is the best move I could make," continued Mary, "but in deference to your strong objections, I will retain say a thousand dollars, and will turn the other three into the family treasury. And, Dick," she added, "we will have that bathroom and water arrangement done. I really would rather have that than my £40 a year, so you see I shall get my money's worth in any event. Now, my dear, scrupulous brother, let us have no more argument about it. I will get father to sell part of my securities when he disposes of his own. So that is settled:

. "Mary, do think this over carefully and don't be carried away by your desire to help. You have no expectations and one of these days you'll get married, when that little capital of yours would probably come

in very handy," contended Dick, finally.

"Two hundred pounds will buy me a very nice trousseau, unless I should marry one of your millionaires, which is barely probable. For the rest of it, Dick, I shall do my very best to capture the kind of a husband who will be able to buy my shoes and stockings after we are married. Besides," she added, whimsically, "who can tell? You might actually turn my nest egg into a small fortune and by that time I could perhaps pass myself off as an American heiress and buy a real title."

"You incorrigible little monkey," cried Dick. "If you won't listen to good advice, I shan't worry any more about you and your affairs. Have your own way, then. But," he continued seriously, "I want you to know, Sis, that this little contribution of yours is of much greater importance than you realize. It represents comfort for you all and also a much needed addition to our working capital. I don't need to tell you that I shall give all that is in me to justify your confidence in me."

"Well, then, everybody, we will consider all this

settled," announced the Sage.

"Right-o. I will pack up and be off at once."

"The family conference is ended," declared Mr. Anstruther, "and as it is late we will retire and devote the rest of Dick's stay here to deeds rather than words. By the way, Dick, you must line all the walls of my prairie den with bookshelves, as I mean to take the whole of my library with me."

"Help! Murder?" cried Dick, amidst gay laughter.
"The natives will positively riot if you invade the luckless prairies with this mountain of accumulated wisdom.
I can just see Billy Purdom, my neighbour, sitting at
your feet and drinking in a ponderous disquisition on the

paleolithic man and all his works."

"That is my condition, Dick," responded Mr. Anstruther, smilingly. "When I consent to bury myself alive on your precious prairies, I don't mean to abandon all intellectual pursuits, although it is possible that my investigations may take rather a different direction to what they have hitherto. There must be some nice economic problems in that isolated country," he added; dreamily, "which should afford ample scope for inquiry by trained minds. Your technical agricultural problems, too, look attractive. On the whole, I see I shall have to make a very considerable addition to my library. I must certainly get a day amongst the second-hand book shops in London before we pack up."

Days of activity followed in the Anstruther household. Dick's things had to be looked over and mended, and the everlasting subject of what the family should bring with them was threshed out over and over again. Mrs. Anstruther's practical mind absorbed all needed information on the subject, and she quietly decided to bring everything useful or ornamental with them. She wanted to reproduce the old surroundings in their new home, as far as it was possible. She proposed to lay in large supplies of linen and bedding of the best quality, and to see that a plentiful store of sensible clothing was procured for every member of the family.

At last came the day of departure for Dick. He had received notification of the sailing of his ship only the night before, which left little time for sentimentalities at home. His packing was finished with a rush, kisses exchanged with his mother and sister and a sturdy handclasp with his father, and he was off for his long trip. He had sent Edith a telegram announcing his departure from England and giving her his Canadian address. He begged her to write him early and often, and promised to mail his first letter to her on landing in Canada—where, he did not know—and would tell her all about his voyage and plans for the immediate future.

The whistle shrieked and presently they were off, cautiously feeling their way, lights extinguished. Submarines lurked everywhere. Leaving the pier with bands playing and handkerchiefs waving was a thing of the pleasant past. No pleasure trip this, with death lying in wait. The danger area safely passed, the crew and passengers breathed a sigh of relief and settled down to the care-free existence of the ocean liner. Dick had written to the owner of the land he proposed purchasing, intending to stay over in Winnipeg to complete the deal on his way west. The money had been duly transferred to his account in the Federal Bank. The stage was set and the time for accomplishments was approaching.

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As he sat on deck the fourth day out—one of those beautiful, calm days which one occasionally encounters on the Atlantic—his thoughts went back to London and to the turmoil of war. There was the heart of Europe at the most stirring epoch in its history, and there, doing her part, was Edith. Every throb of the powerful engines carried him farther away from her. When and under what circumstances were they to meet again? Were their lives destined to converge to a common point or—the doubt was maddening—would she not resist the constant pressure from her sunt and the glamour of wealth with which she was normally surrounded? Dick finally turned in and, healthy, vigorous animal that he was quickly became oblivious to all his problems and troubles.

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### CHAPTER SEVEN

THE STEAMER landed her passengers at Halifax after an uneventful voyage and Dick started on his long overland journey to Calgary. The luxurious sleeping cars and the marvellous dining car service on the famous trans-continental train was a welcome relief from the stress and strain of war-torn Europe. He traversed the wild, rocky reaches of Northern Ontario, that "no-man's land" of Canada, dividing the agricultural West from the industrial East; that region that has created a sharp cleavage between the old civilization and the new, and given rise to the vast problems in transportation and fiscal policies that have troubled the minds of Canadian statesmen and torn great political parties asunder. His train presently entered the province of Manitoba and the same evening he alighted at the station in Winnipeg.

The following day he met by appointment the owner of the land he desired to purchase, and diplomatically 'approached the subject. He announced that he had reason to believe that he could find a purchaser if the price was made attractive enough. The price first quoted was, however, entirely out of the question. If a deal were ultimately made, it would be, at least, a half-cash transaction. Crafty Dick! He was learning the potent force of cold cash. He returned to his hotel, affecting a fine disregard for the outcome of the nego-The following day the conversation was resumed, and the now harassed and brow-beaten owner reluctantly accepted a figure much below Dick's wildest anticipations. He had saved a cool thousand on the transaction and felt he could afford to apprise his people of the happy result by cable. This had been a good stroke of business. Dick began to feel that he could hold his own. He wondered if the war had sharpened

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his wits. If the balance of the capital could be equally well invested, he should regard the future with confidence. The monetary and legal formalities were quickly concluded and Dick left Winnipeg with the agreement

of sale in his pocket.

As he journeyed over the prairies he regarded the farms along the railway with new interest. He now had about a thousand acres of land under his control and management. A sizable undertaking. He studied the arrangement of farm buildings en route. would be needed on his own place. There was much to learn and much to consider. Crops were apparently bountiful this year. It would mean prosperity in Ca-The East would be sending train-loads of its products to the prairie farmer, who would have the proceeds of his crop wherewith to purchase them. Prices of grain had not yet taken their spectacular upward swing, but they were higher than usual. looked appraisingly upon the small herds of cattle and horses grazing neacefully on the prairie grass. That was the thing. Live stock. Safe and certain. Neither wind nor weather could affect profits there. regretted his limited experience in animal husbandry. But he would hire the best man that he could find: one whose judgement could be relied on. What was it the famous Carnegie once said about his own business? "I don't know steel, but I know men who know steel." That was the line to follow. Then he must learn; carefully study, until he could safely rely on his own judgment.

The train pulled into the Calgary station, and Dick, gathering his goods and belongings, jumped to the platform and made his way to the palatial hotel, registered and was assigned a room, which would compare favourably with the best London could produce. Pioneering was assuredly a long forgotten term in this metropolis of Southern Alberta, with its wide, well-paved streets,

tram cars, motor traffic and imposing buildings. Dick stood at his bedroom window on the sixth floor and stared at the panorama that unfolded itself before him. The snow-capped crests of the Rocky Mountains rose majestically above the green hills to the west. The crystal clear water of the Bow River glimmered in the sunlight, as it wended its way almost through the centre of the city, which apparently stretched out for miles in every direction. Tree-lined residential streets, flanked with neat houses and artistic bungalows, surrounded by green lawns and bright flower beds, paralleled each other and bore evidence of general prosperity and refinement. It was a home city this. A place to be proud of. What a contrast to the narrow, squalid, monotonous streets of the average English manufacturing city!

And what were all these good people doing for a living, hived together on an expanse of prairie at the junction of the Elbow River with the mighty Bow, where, only a few, brief years ago, the Indian had held undisputed sway? That was the important question. The future of Dick's venture depended on the answer. There must be wealth in that prairie sed to build cities like this. Permanent, inexhaustible wealth. History had taught him that the only sure foundation for civilization was the basic industry spriculture. Non-agricultural countries existed only by sufferance. Surely, where so many had succeeded on the land and they must have succeeded; here was the tangible evidence of it—he could not fail. He would be of good cheer and contemplate the future with confidence.

Dick spent a busy afternoon interviewing painters, paper hangers, plumbers and carpenters. He was able to make advantageous terms, as trade happened to be a little dull at that particular time, and arrangements were accordingly made to commence operations on the renovation of his farm buildings the same week. He

drifted into a garage owned by a friend of his and soon was absorbed in an animated conversation reviewing all the important events that had occurred since he went overseas. He told his friend about his intended farming operations and the forthcoming arrival of his family.

"What sort of a car are you going to get?" he asked.
"My dear Christian friend," Dick replied. "I am not going to farm with limousines. When I make my stake, I'll talk car; in the meanwhile we will use the

reliable old horses or walk."

"Look here, old man, you have got the wrong slant on that question," he countered. "I look upon a car as one of the prime necessities of a farm and, in your case, I'll go so far as to term it an absolutely indispensable implement—just as necessary as your ploughs and waggons. The driving team was all right in the old days before we had motor cars at popular prices, but it is hopelessly out of date now."

"Yes, I am not disputing all that, but, as it happens, I am not spending my own money and luxuries will

have to wait.

"That's just the point. A car on a farm is not a luxury by a long shot. Besides, don't you think your people would feel much happier with an occasional shopping tour to the city instead of being cooped up on that farm of yours from one year's end to the other."

"Can't be denied," replied Dick. "But I need the

money for productive work."

"But you can't get away from some expense to enable you to get about. I'll tell you what I'll do. I took in a used flivver the other day in a trade and I will let you have it at a bargain. I have completely overhauled it and you can have it for \$350. That is less than you would have to spend on your team and, democrat

Dick's registance was breaking down. There was

some sense in the argument, but it went against the grain to hamper himself with the upkeep of the car.

"We will take a demonstration run, Dick, and you

can then make up your mind about it."

Dick consented and presently they were gliding pleasantly over the paved streets. The car was apparently in good order, and ran smoothly and satisfactorily and before they returned to the garage, he found himself vested with the ownership of a "flivver" on the understanding that a coat of paint was to be included

• in the price quoted.

After returning to the hotel Dick suffered pangs of remorse. He must not lose his head and be so easily inveigled into buying things. His capital was severely limited and must be expended exclusively in productive investments. However, he saw also the good points in his deal. Apart from the practical use he could make of the car, it was perhaps good business not to overlook the very important problem of making the home life as attractive as possible. God knows, they would need all the pleasure he could give them to compensate for all they were giving up in emigrating. Mary should learn how to run the car and she would often be able to save him trips to the village when the busy season was on. The more he thought about it, the more he became े रे जारी है के के नेवाली संस्थानिक की स्थानिक में रे रे reconciled to the deal.

The following morning Dick took the train for Clearwater, having previously telephoned to his neighbour, Billy Purdom, to meet him at the station. He reached his destination within a couple of hours and was soon surrounded by a group of friends. This was the first time he had experienced the sensation of the tranquering hero". Very few wounded soldiers had at time returned from the front and Dick speedily realized that the village insisted on making an event of it. He was escorted to the hotel for limch and was bombarded with questions about the progress of the way its prob-

able duration, and all the harrowing details of this extraordinary struggle, which completely passed the understanding of communities so far removed from the

gory scene of action.

Dick was frankly lionized by everybody and soon realized that his business affairs would have to be postponed. The hunger for first-hand information was insatiable. Everyone had friends and relations at the front and the war was the all-absorbing interest in their beings and topic of conversation. It was late in the evening when Dick escaped from the crowd and started on the six-mile drive to the farm. His neighbour evidently was not of the spending or affluent sort, and still drove his horse and buggy. This Dick noted with some misgivings.

The family was all asleep when they reached the little farm house late at night. Dick was accommodated with a "shake-down" in the loft and soon fell asleep. The following morning he was greeted enthusiastically by Mrs. Purdom and the children, who had grown considerably since the last time he had seen them.

"Well, well, Dick," she cried when she saw him returning to the shack after his morning's ablutions. "We are sure glad to see you back again. And Billy tells me that you have bought the 'castle' and that

your folks are coming out."

"Yes, Mrs. Purdom, that's the plan. The next question is whether I am going to be able to wrest a lifting out of it for us all. I am sure you will like them and help them all you can. You know," he added, banteringly. I have told them great tales about you and your cooking and chickens. They will have lots to learn and I know you are not going to go back on me."

You can bank on that. Dick. If they are anything like you all I can say is that they are regular folks and will get a warm welcome from this family."

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Dick sauntered to the shed to help with the chores, according to the custom of the country, while Mrs. Purdom busied herself with preparations for breakfast and dressing the children. Presently the men returned, Dick carrying two pails of new milk which he proceeded to strain into the brightly scoured can. The table was laid and the simple meal was commenced after the usual brief blessing, uttered in a low voice by the head of the house.

Billy Purdom had been settled on the "creek" for some years. He had homesteaded a quarter section and bought the adjoining quarter from the railway company upon extended terms of payment. Both he and his wife sprang from good old Eastern Canadian farm stock. Hard work had been the lot of their ancestors and hard work was the lot of Billy and Jenny in their effort to establish a home on the western prairies. They toiled to live and lived to toil. Billy was not an Adonis: Ever since childhood he had done his share in the field and his bodily development had progressed along the line of producing a thoroughly capable and enduring human working unit rather than the physical perfection of the trained athlete. In fact, Billy was decidedly squat and stubby. But his dimpy, graceless appearance was immediately forgotten once the beholder had a good look at his tanned kindly face

The Purdom shack was typical of the dwellings of the earlier years of pioneering. It was constructed of logs, with an upper story, made of rough boards, to which access was obtained by means of latider. The roof was shingled, the loft had a small window in each end and the sloping roof was just high enough to enable the occupant to stand upright in the center. A stove pipe penetrated the floor in the madele and joined a tin chimney, riding the hip of the rough. Its sole furnishing was a double bunk made out of limiter.

A set of cheap bed springs and a mattress ensured comfortable rest.

Downstairs was a fairly large living room with a bedroom at each end. The cook-stove stood in one end of the former and a dresser, placed against the bedroom partition, contained the dishes and kitchen utensils.

The table, upon which the breakfast was now spread, was a home product, rough but solid. It was covered with a square of olicioth, the pattern of which was gradually disappearing through much energetic washing and scrubbing. It was worn thin in several places. The seats were hard and uncomfortable of the variety known to the initiated as "kitchen chairs", but, as a concession to the demands of tired, work-worn bodies, Billy had created two easy chairs by the simple process of removing the top and one quarter of each of two apple barrels and stuffing the bottom with hay. Mrs. Purdom had added to the illusion by neatly covering them with matonne. It was a very effective makeshift.

On the wall, opposite the door, on each side of the window, hing crayon enlargements almost life size of Mrs. Purdom's parents, in ornate frames. looked ridiculously out of proportion to the low ceiling and diminutive windows. The subjects were severe of aspect and seemed to resent the affront cast upon them in compelling them to be silent participators in the life of this humble dwelling. The end of the room opposite the kitchen stove was evidently consecrated to the business and intellectual life of the family. A buge calendar, displaying a highly coloured landscape, where blue sky and green foliage were somewhat marred with imminerable fly-specks; adorned one side; while two shalves on iron brackets contained the family library, which, to be strictly truthful, was of a highly utilitarian variety, contaming such works as the People's Veterinarian, the Complete Family Dodor, several

government blue books, which an energetic member of parliament had distributed amongst his constituents, an enormous catalogue of a celebrated Eastern department store and back copies, in neat piles, of the agricultural paper of the province. The inevitable patent medicine almanac hung on a nail near the corner of the lower shelf, available for instant consultation in case.

of distress or accident to man or beast.

Beyond the door, on the left, hung the family store of hats, caps and overcoats suitable for wear at all seasons. Sheepskin collars and linings to winter coats, slickers and other garments. No need to preserve these in lavender and moth balls. They bore evidence of good honest wear and much mending. Over them an old-fashioned shot-gun hung on a hook. On the right side of the door, on a wide shelf, stood the water pail, and next to it the tin wash basin. The dipper hung on the wall between the two and on the shelf next to the basin, reposing on a saucer, a large bar of laundry On the back of the door hung the family roller towel, and immediately to the left thereof, suspended on a string, a bone comb. A small mirror, which contorted one's features into those of a grotesque gargoyle, completed the simple but sufficient toilet equipment. the window ledge, facing the south, two or three geraniums in full bloom added a touch of colour to the sombre surroundings.

The table service was not extensive nor perhaps laid with an eye to tickle the jaded palate. Happily, appetities required no artificial stimulation in this home. Knives and forks were of steel with discoloured bone handles, one or two of which had parted company from these serviceable articles, leaving behind a number of rough rivets that might perchance have proved uncomfortable to smooth, soft akinged hands. The porridge bowls were of ample size and the granite-ware milk-jug of corresponding dimensions. Teaspoons

were conveniently displayed in a very substantial glass and the home-cured, salt bacon was merrily frizzling

on the stove as the morning meal proceeded.

There was no evidence of want in this household, and in spite of the cramped accommodation, a certain order undoubtedly prevailed. Meals were never late and the routine of the home and farm work proceeded with regularity. The standards of life and habits of the family were perhaps primitive, but far from slovenly. The glasses were clean, but not highly polished.

The uncovered floor was not white as the driven snow of tener than once a week, when it received its regular scrubbing. The traffic of men with muddy boots and children with dirty little feet, imposed limitations. But the shack and its occupants were as clean and tidy as a thoroughly competent, hard-working woman could make them, without devoting greater time to the task than more important duties permitted.

Such were the surroundings of Billy Purdom, his kindly efficient wife and his little ones. Dick had long ago penetrated to the soul of this home. He estimated these sterling people at their true worth, and appreciated their unselfish and spontaneous hospitality, good sound advice, and anxiety to lend a helping hand at any time required. 

#### CHAPTER EIGHT

THE following morning, after chores and breakfast, Dick accompanied by the Purdom family paid a visit to the "castle". They had taken a light lunch with them. Being Sunday, all farm work was suspended, and ample time was needed and available to get Billy's practical opinion on the multitude of problems which assailed Dick's mind. He should have to take up his abode in the house while the work of improvements and renovation was going on. Billy, who had looked after his place during his absence, was still taking care of his live-stock and equipment, which he would not take over until the new place was in proper running order.

When they had unlocked the door of the house and removed the boards that had been nailed over the down-stairs windows, a dismal sight confronted them. Paper was hanging from the walls in strips, the floor was covered with the accumulated dust of years, and the remains of the previous owner's packing and moving enterprise. Holes in the plaster met the eyes everywhere and part of the ceiling of the atting room was lying on the floor. Evidently, the roof had leaked. One room after the other displayed the same discouraging state and Dick was beginning to feel the depressing effects of the general ruin and disorder.

sing effects of the general ruin and disorder.

"Now, Dick," Mrs. Purdom observed judicially, "you will have to invest in a broom and dust pan and get your coat off. Rust sweep out the worst of this wreck; the workmen will make plenty more before they are through, I guess. When you get them out of the house, Billy will have to give me a couple of days off, and I will come over and help you to house clean from cellar to garret."

"That is mighty kind of you, Mrs. Purdom," Dick

replied gratefully. "I don't know how I should be able to manage without you. I'll certainly return the compliment at the first opportunity."

"Oh, don't mention it—that's only neighbourly." One of these days we shall need your help, depend on

that."

Billy carefully examined the house. The cellar was lined with substantial plank, still in a good state of preservation and the boulder foundation under the walls was as true as the day it was laid. The floors were even and level. The woodwork was in good condition and doors and windows fitted snugly. A couple of coats of paint was needed on the outside and the fence was badly in need of repair. Billy's verdict was satisfactory.

"Do you know, Dick, I have never been inside this old house until to-day. The people who built it were not interested in common folks like us. There is good material and workmanship here and I have an idea that when you get the jobs done you have in mind, this

place is going to surprise you considerably."

"I hope you are right, Billy," replied Dick. "It rather gives me the creeps to look at it now, but it cer-

tainly has possibilities."

Of course it has, for those who can afford such a home. You were travelling in luck when you got it. Think of what it would cost you to build a house large enough to accommodate your family, with labour and material where it is to-day. The last owner went broke, to be sure, but it's an ill wind that blows nobody good!

Taking about going broke, Billy, reminds me of something I have had in mind since I left England. I have got to go into live stock to play safe and that is a new game for me. Dun't you think I ought to get a good man to help me?

Tertainly do You will have work here for an extra hand all the year round if you are going to make

the place pay. I think I could solve that difficulty for you, as it happens. My youngest brother has been working on a large pure bred stock farm near Guelph in the East for several years. He wants to come West on the first harvest excursion this fall with the idea of starting for himself some time in the future. He wrote me a week or two ago asking me to find a job for him. I have not seen him since I left home, but as far as I can learn, he is a hard working lad and must have picked up a lot of useful experience where he is now working. He will be here in a few weeks and it would do you no harm to have a talk with him. Of course, it would suit us fine to have him near us."

"Billy, that proposition is surely made to order. You drop him a line and tell him there is a job for him

right here," replied Dick enthusiastically.

"Not so fast, old man, we will look him ever first. I am not going to see you stuck with any brother of

mine unless he can make good."

Dick was soon installed in his new abode and the following week became the witness of frantic schivity. The selection of the wall paper had caused some hesitation, but Dick had finally decided on some simple patterns and as each room was completed he had no rason to regret his choice. The plumbing job caused him the greatest concern. The house was built close to he creek and a well had been due near its bank. This did not yield sufficient water suppressed had to be deepened. A large pressure tank was preced under ground below the frost line with a pipe line consecting it with the well, over which a windmil was exceeded to furnish power for pumping. A procelan sine was hot and cold water was provided in the ritches. Become fixtures were installed with drainage into a service and hot air furnace was erected and a hot water tank connected with the kitchen stove. It proved a most effi-

cient installation. When the inside work was finally completed. Mrs. Purdom arrived upon the scene, armed with brooms, brushes and cloths, and assisted by Dick. who spent the better part of two days on his knees. vigorously operating a scrubbing brush, she speedily worked a transformation that fairly took Dick's breath AWAY SERVER SERV

After Mrs. Purion left him to his own devices. Dick put the finishing touches on things. The windows, were washed and polished and paint marks removed. The sink and bathroom fixtures were cleaned until they shone. The following Sunday the Purdoms paid him a visit of inspection. The house was clean and sweet. resplendent inside and out with fresh paint. Billy could hardly believe his own eyes.

"Why, Dick," he exclaimed, "this old house is fit for a king now."

"It sounds almost ridiculous to say so, but I am actually beginning to think that my family is going to find it just a bit more convenient and comfortable than the one they have been living in at home. I suppose though I am a little prejudiced. But I do

hope they will like it.

All I can say is that they are uncommonly hard to please if they don't observed Mrs. Purdom. "I just think this is perfect. Oh. Billy." she added wishfully, "I wonderst we will ever have a furnace and hot water laid into the house and a beautiful kitchen sink like LOCAL DESIGNATION OF THE PARTY OF THE PARTY

But the planes wonder old girl replied Bally. But until we can make some money we will just have to be establed wells the old shapl as it is. There was himdreds of things we want before we can begin to fix up the books I greated with resignation Still we make been happy and comfortable enough as me are and I don't want to become dissatisfied ion account of your good fortune, Dick; I am sure I hope you will all be as happy here as Billy and I have been—

I can wish you no greater luck than that."

"Thank you, Mrs. Purdom," Dick replied, and, after a pause, "before I left home, my mother one day suggested that happiness comes from within rather than from external things and I expect she is right: At any rate, I shall do my level best to make them all

happy and comfortable."

The Purdoms left early and Dick had the rest of the Sunday to himself. He wandered through the empty house, pausing in each room, lost in admiration. The consciousness of satisfactory personal accomplishment had woven its spell around him. This and that and the other thing he had done with his own hands or devised with his own brain. It was well done, well A casual onlooker might say that it was thought out. just a common ordinary square house. There were millions of them in the cities, larger, handsomer, better equipped. But this was his house, rescued from dirt; disorder, decay by his own effort. Now it was a beautiful thing, spotless, solid and substantial s fit and proper home for his family. And he had done this thing, performed this wonderful transformation! Could anything in life equal this pride of possession and ac-·complishment?

He strolled out of doors and stood gaining at the house, gaily shining in its new coat of paint from a distance. It looked prosperous and imposing. The situation was beautiful. The distant hills waste beginning to take on the golden has of automin. The valley was still green and inviting. The mountain stream rushed turbulently over the boulders and gravel the scrub and trees along the banks were reflected in the clear water, where trout were large summing themselves in the deep pools. A grove of spruos and popular, with a dense underbrush, enveloped the house on three sides.

leaving a charming view of the creek from the front

verandah.

The setting could hardly be improved upon. Whatever the other shortcomings of the builder, he had at least possessed an eye for the beautiful. Dick felt sorry for him. He had, no doubt, been inspired with the same anxiety to succeed as now had Dick in its grasp. When failure overtook him, he must have been the prey of deep disappointment and dismay. Life was cruel. Would he also, in years to come, sit here and curse the day that he first saw this exquisite spot? Or would his dreams of success be realized? With an effort, Dick arose, dismissing from his mind these morbid reflections, and made his way to the outbuilding

and corrais below the house.

Here would be the next scene of activity. One of the labourers, handy with hammer, saw and paintbrush, had been retained to help him with repairs there. Posts had to be renewed and interior arrangements changed. The shack on Dick's place had to be torn down and re-created in the rear of the house to serve as workshop garage and bunk-house. Fences needed overhanting. He was eager to get at it all. The corrals had been pronounced satisfactory by Billy Purdom, and Dick promptly decided to take them down, turn the sturdy posts upside down, to give them a longer life. and move the corrain over to the other side of the shed and stables where access to the creek during the winter was more convenient and less dangerous. Slipping on a steep loss day bank when going to the water hole on the creek had to be guarded against with cows it calf and mares in foal. What a lot of detail there was to be worked out! Had any one ever mastered all the inordedge requirement thest arming business. He found it similes territying to contemplate the small fund of Practical information he had gathered in his brief experience in Canada

# The Fruits of the Earth

Dick had wisely arranged that his family should pack up and ship their furniture to him a month before sailing, spending the interval in a series of farewell visits among relatives. He wanted to unpack everything and move the furniture into the house, so that, on arrival, they could quickly settle down, without too much confusion. He was anxious that their first impression of the new home should not be marred by disorder and inconvenience. He was wise in his generation. So much depends on first impressions. He had refrained from going into detail in regard to the house, but had taken the precaution to send the measurements of floors and windows, so that his mother might purchase any rugs or curtain material she would needalthough he had no doubt that she was already plentifully supplied with both. He had exercised good generalship, he felt.

While he was busily at work on his outbuildings, the shipment reached the village and with Billy's help he started hauling everything to the farm. He was astounded and dismayed at the volume of stuff the carcontained, but was reassured by Billy, who intimated that a house like his would take a powerful lot of furnishing. The task completed, Dick and his helper commenced uncrating the furniture, putting it together and moving it into the house. The careful, painstaking job the British workmen had done in packing the things was a source of continued merriment to both of them. But there were no breakages. The result almost justified the elaborate precautions.

Dick made no special attempt to properly place the furniture. He put a bed in each room upstairs, placed the dinner table, sideboard and chairs in that part of the large living room nearest the kitchen door. The den, which had already been fitted with bookshelves according to Mr. Anstruther's directions, received all the furniture from the English library. It seemed to fit in

beautifully. The view from the two windows was pleasant. Dick felt sure that his father would like it. It was a long, somewhat narrow, room and the light was

good for reading. Yes, this would do.

The bathroom was a thing of beauty, in its spotless white enamel and nickel-plated fittings. The four bedrooms were pleasant enough. The large one, facing the west would be occupied by the old people. Mary would have the one adjoining and he would take the small one facing the south, leaving as guest room the one in the southwest corner. That would be a splendid arrangement. Martha, who had joyfully consented to come, would have a nice little room in the attic

The only problem was perhaps the combined living and dining room. They were not accustomed to having their meals in the sitting room. However, that was a small matter after all. It was a handsome room twenty—four feet long, and almost as wide, and contained, on the north wall, a beautifully constructed open fireplace made of smooth creek boulders pointed in black mortar. This lent an air of artistic finish to the whole apartment and Dick thought would gladden his mother's heart.

There was heaps of space for the furniture.

A bright new rug had been procured in England for the living room. After he had laid it down and temporarily placed the furniture, he sat down in a comfortable chair and surveyed the result. Of course, without curtains, the room looked bare, but the handsome old mahogany furniture lent an air of comfort and distinction. Dick sat there a long time, lost in admiration of his handiwork, He pictured the arrival of his family, anticipating his delight in guiding them over the new home. He just knew they would love it all!

Another week had slipped by, and the corrals and outbuildings were beginning to take on a finished appearance. The garage would soon be completed. He had worked 'like a fool' he admitted to himself. Dead

tired every night, but ready early each morning to tackle the new day's task. He had never enjoyed himself so thoroughly in his life before. The impending arrival of the family spurred him on to greater effort. This was decidedly worth while. He had now been connected up with the rural telephone service, operated by the Provincial government. It was Sunday morning and he had just received a wire over the phone to the effect that his people had reached Halifax and would arrive in Calgary the following Thursday. He would meet them there, take delivery of his car, and motor them out to the farm during the afternoon. They would enjoy the trip in the fresh air after the long journey.

On Tuesday Mrs. Purdom came over to help him put on the finishing touches. Everything was a revelation to her. The beautiful furniture, the well-appointed kitchen, the handsome rugs and pictures. She regarded Dick with a new sense of inferiority. But his frank deference to her opinion and profuse gratitude for her help, disarmed her completely. He would always be their good friend, whatever attitude his people might take. These imposing surroundings would never make any difference in their social intercourse. She felt certain of that. Mrs. Purdom made out a list of provisions to last them for some days, and Dick the following morning drove to the village and executed the order. In the evening his man drove him back and Dick took the night train to Calcarv.

As he travelled over the prairie, his nerves were at high tension. It was a bold move to transplant the family to a western farm. What if they should hate the life? He would then be the unhappiest of men. For there was no turning back now without ruinous financial loss and perpetual misery for them all. Surely God in His mercy would incline their hearts to love this young country as he did and enable them to adapt

themselves to the new life. He thought of his quiet, wise mother. She would certainly "fit in". His father would be happy in his library and studies. No question about that. His sister was young and adaptable. Yes, everything would be well. Not a doubt about it!

## CHAPTER NINE

TADY SELINA MARCIA ROKEBY, a dweller in , Mayfair when in London, was giving a reception. A dinner preceded this function to which the favoured few had been invited. Lady Rokeby was a widow without children, possessed of ample means. She was also Edith's aunt, mother by adoption and all around tyrant. She dabbled a little in politics and prided herself on the faint official flavour of her recep-She was an exceedingly well-preserved woman just past fifty. What nature denied her in the way of preservation, a skilled maid and a famous dressmaker did their best to supply. She did not come from a prolific family. Between herself and her sister, Edith's mother, one child was the sum total of their contaibution towards the perpetuation of their blood. The litle had passed to a nephew, the son of her husband's younger brother, who had been carefully and expectantly groomed for the great position he now occupied. Lady Rokeby had the use of the Dower House on the Kent estate and also a very nice town house, and sufficient income to keep up a comfortable establishment. But, alas, all this was for life only. She herself came from an impoverished family and had succeeded in making, from a material point of view, quite a brilliant marriage. She could leave Edith very little, because, unfortunately, she had not been a frugal and saving She herself had married into worldly success against very discouraging obstacles. Edith was now practically in the same position in which she had found herself as a girl. But, no. Not quite. Edith had a doting and ambitious aunt, with moderate wealth and social position, who could pull the strings. Lucky Edith? The cases were, however, almost parallel and the remedy obviously identical with her own.

should marry position and fortune. This became her obsession in life. The child was practically her only

near relation.

Did Edith approve of her ambitious plans? Yes—and no. As an abstract theory, marrying position and fortune was very attractive. Would any impoverished young woman cavil at such an entirely reasonable proposal? More particularly when this had been emphasized as the most desirable end of life almost ever since her childhood. The effect of the constant dropping of water upon a stone is well understood, and the human mind is much softer than stone. Edith was, therefore, fully in accord with her aunt's laudable programme, theoretically.

The trouble arose, however, when Lady Selina endeavoured to translate theories into concrete accomplishment, by means of introducing to Edith eligible, prospective candidates for her heart and hand. Edith thought some of them insufferable. Others were physically repugnant to her. No effort on Lady Rokeby's part led to anything beyond mere acquaintance. Ro-

mance seemed to be dead.

"My dear child," she exclaimed one day, more in sorrow than in anger, "I simply can't comprehend your attitude towards men. At times I almost begin to think that your affections must be bestowed elsewhere. It isn't natural for a young girl to be so perfectly oblivious to the male sex as you are. I hope there is no entanglement between you and the Anstruther boy?"

Laby Rokeby's features betokened anxiety. It was plainly to be seen that any such finale to her matrimonial campaign would grieve her beyond measure. Edith, on the other hand, seemed quite undisturbed.

This was not a propitious sign for Dick's case.

"Of course, dear, I should not dream of becoming entangled, as you so picturesquely describe it, without your full knowledge. Aunt Selina," she added, thought-

fully, "I wish you would cease worrying your dear, old head about me and my future. My fate will map itself out in its own good time. You know I can't go and get married to order, just as one would buy a new costume."

"Rubbish," answered Aunt Selina. She had no faith whatever in fate. She had no intention of leaving such practical affairs as matrimony to fate or chance or whatever one might call it. Such a mental attitude was entirely foreign to all her experience in life and ideas of the fitness of things generally. It was preposterous for a beautiful girl in Edith's position to drift along, through the bloom of her youth, with an utter disregard to the all-important question of marriage. It is to be feared, that Aunt Selina was of the practical type of female. "Rubbish," she said, unsympathetically. "I am not suggesting you should marry any one you entertain a positive dislike for. But, surely, you could find happiness with some one of the eligible men you have met, who might feel disposed to offer you his name."

"Possibly I could, dear, but intuition has not yet indicated the man and, if it did, I have no assurance that he would reciprocate. I really do want to please you, Aunt Selina, but somehow I seem to lack the faculty of cold-blooded appraisement and that nicely calculated line of personal conduct which seem to be

essential in man-hunting."

"Dear me, whoever thought of such a vulgar thing as man-hunting," exclaimed Lady Rokesby, impatiently. "In my day young men and women could associate socially and gradually become intimate, with all that such natural relations might lead to, without any suggestion that the girls were 'man-hunting' as you call it. We married within our own rank and station in life and I have yet to learn that we were predestined to unhappiness. I am afraid this war work of yours, which, however, as a patriotic woman, I cannot dis-

approve of, is broadening out you young girls to a rather

alarming extent."

Edith did not answer. This argument was becoming tiresome in the extreme. "By the way, Edith, I hear from the rector that the Anstruthers are emigrating to Canada. He tells me they have bought a farm out, in the West somewhere."

"Yes, dear. Dick was in town before he sailed and told me all about it. I feel rather sorry for Mary, I

think."

"I don't see why. They are not very well off and what chance has Mary to marry advantageously here? Out in Western Canada she will probably meet some suitable young man and get a home of her own."

"Well, dear, if you fail in your heroic efforts to get me married off, I shall have to appeal to Mrs. Anstruther to find me a tame, well-behaved western farmer," Edith replied smilingly. She did not want to reopen

the subject.

But, as previously stated, Lady Selina was giving a reception on this particular evening. Edith, on pain of deepest displeasure, had been requested to be present and also to dine. She was sitting in her bedroom, in a very charming negligé, reading a recent letter from Dick. He told her all he had been doing and the transformation that had been wrought in the "castle" and the part he himself had taken in it. Dick scrubbing floors, cooking, polishing windows, washing dishes! He told her he was fairly developing a case of housemaid's knees! How very extraordinary! Her aunt had intimated that the Hon. Gerald Cust would take her in to-night. She tried to picture the Hon. Gerald scrubbing floors. She felt certain his eye-glass would continually fall into the pail. But, then, Gerald did not have to scrub floors. He held a minor appointment in the Foreign Office, which accounted for the fact that he was not at the front. He was Aunt Selina's favourite protegé, was very eligible indeed and, on the whole, not a bad fellow.

Edith proceeded vigorously with brushing her hair. The taxi would be at the door shortly and she had dawdled over her dressing to an unusual degree. She deftly piled her tresses into a vastly becoming crown, took a swift and approving glance at her reflection in the mirror, discarded her dressing gown and, after slipping the silk encased little feet into satin slippers, donned an attractive filmy creation in pale blue. She made a lovely picture and Aunt Selina might well wonder why she had met such small success in her matrimonial campaign in her behalf. The Hon. Gerald would be thrilled. It was the intention that he should be.

Edith reached the house barely in time to join her aunt before the guests commenced to arrive. Standing by Lady Rokeby's side, she smiled a welcome at them all, and was duly claimed by young Cust and commenced an animated conversation on the progress of the war and the topics of the day. Dinner was presently announced by a ponderous butler and the party trailed into the handsome dining room, shining with silver and cut glass, reposing on white damask. The ladies' dresses and the beautiful flowers added a warm touch of colour, emphasized by the sombre black and white of the male guests. The meal proceeded and the conversation became general and gay. Edith felt at home. Her artistic sense responded generously to these congenial surroundings.

She was enjoying all this on suffrance. One of these days it would cease unless she married wealth and position. Could she be happy without it? She doubted it. Dick was a dear. He was without exception the most attractive man she knew. But existence on an isolated prairie farm would be unthinkable. She was in a brown study, almost oblivious to her neighbour's

conversation. She liked Dick far too well to marry him and ruin his life. She would tell him so soon, and beside, Aunt Selina could not be put off much longer. She was conscious of a new and disturbing mental irresolution that vaguely worried her. She simply could not marry Dick. It was out of the question and her plain duty was to tell him so. There should be no further vacillation.

"I am afraid I must have a depressing effect on you this evening, Miss Fane," she heard, as in a dream.

Her table partner was looking at her quizzically.

"Not in the least," she countered gaily. "My mind went wool-gathering for a moment, but I am entirely at your service now, prepared to devote my deepest attention to any weighty subject you may feel disposed to introduce."

"Do you know, I never saw you look more attrac-

tive than you do to-night?" he whispered.

"Am I to take that as a compliment?" she asked.
"The point is how attractive, or unattractive you have seen me look in the past."

"Really, I should be afraid to tell you."

"Is it as bad as that? You must have seen me lately then, covered with black grease. I can't imagine anyone looking attractive or dignified arguing with a refractory motor car. Can you?"

"Yes, I think I could. But you are wilfully mis-

understanding me."

A heaven sent footman projected himself between them to remove the plates and Edith casually addressed some remark to the elderly gentleman on her left. Cust's conversation was getting much too personal for the dinner table. Gerald was a very presentable young man. She rather liked him better than her other suitors. He was also a great favourite of Aunt Selina, who, however, had studiously refrained from endeavouring to advance his cause. He had been very

attentive to Edith for some time, although she had seen little of him recently. She had at one time been prejudiced against him because he had not joined the military service, but she had subsequently learned that he could not get leave on account of his Foreign Office connection. The dearth of man-power at the front had not yet become acute. The ladies left the table and the men remained behind, smoking and chatting in

groups over the port wine.

The guests for the reception commenced to arrive and the drawing room soon presented a gay and imposing appearance. Sweet music flowed from the gallery and well-known artists warbled for the well-dressed multitude. The function was an unqualified success and Lady Selina was in her element, graciously chatting with all sorts of persons. She had the reputation of being a charming and tactful hostess and she fairly outdid herself on this occasion. Edith, later in the evening, found herself in the secluded conservatory with her dinner partner.

"Miss Fane," e said hesitatingly. "I have some hope of getting to the front shortly. My people have brought pressure to bear in the proper quarter. I thought I would like to tell you. You may have won-

dered why I am not in uniform now."

"Not in the least. Aunt Selina explained the reason to me long ago," replied Edith quickly. "I

suppose you are delighted."

"I am. It has been simply awful to parade the streets in mufti with all my friends across the channel fighting. I wanted you to understand that I have done my level best to get leave."

"Of course you have, Mr. Cust. Anyone who

knows you could hardly doubt that".

"Before I go, I wanted to unburden myself to you. You cannot help knowing that I have been one of your humble worshippers for a long time, but somehow you

have never given me the opportunity of seriously pleading my case. I am supposed to be in the school of diplomacy, but I am afraid my training forsakes me utterly when I talk to you. To state the matter bluntly I have received Lady Rokeby's permission to ask you to marry me. She tells me that she had no objections. I love you very dearly, as you have undoubtedly guessed, and . . ."

"Mr. Cust," interrupted Edith nervously, "I do feel unutterably grateful to you. I like you and honestly wish I could return your affection, but I can't be untruthful in such a matter. Of course, I ought to accept you. Aunt Selina will be perfectly furious with me. But I should lose all my pride and self respect if I took advantage of you for purely selfish reasons. Dear Mr. Cust," she added appealingly, "you understand, don't you?"

"Absolutely, Miss Fane; I love you and honour you more than ever for your frankness, if that were possible. But I am not going to consider this final. I won't make a nuisance of myself," he continued hastily, "but some day you might change your mind. At least, for the present I am going to hope you may. In the meanwhile we are going to remain good friends,

aren't we:"

"We could never be anything else," she replied ambiguously, "but please forget all about me and seek elsewhere for happiness. I should disappoint you.

I know I should."

Their quiet nook was disturbed by strolling guests and a girl friend joined them and put an end to Edith's embarrassment. Cust escorted them to the drawing room and presently took his leave, showing no trace of disappointment at the unfavourable turn events had taken. He had not anticipated unconditional refusal, and he firmly made up his mind to try again.

Edith was to stay over night at her aunt's house.

After the last guest had departed she and Edith made themselves comfortable and foregathered for a brief chat in Lady Rokeby's boudoir.

"Well, dear, did Gerald have it out with you to-

night?"

"He asked me to marry him, if that is what you mean," replied Edith composedly. She anticipated a bad half hour.

"And . . . ," asked her aunt inquiringly.

"And I refused him."

"I thought you would. I am a bit disappointed in No use disguising that fact. I doubt you, dear. whether you will have an opportunity like that again. He comes into the title one of these days and the family is wealthy. Gerald is a boy of rather fine character, which is not the invariable rule amongst young men about town these days. With his family influence, he is bound to get a good diplomatic appointment soon. Really, Edith," she added dejectedly, "I simply cannot understand you in the very least. You are not at all unsophisticated, as far as one can judge. As a matter of fact, you seem to have an unnaturally level head for your years. And in spite of it all, you seem entirely unconcerned in regard to your own future. You know, dear, after I am gone everything will change for you. I have been a rather extravagant woman, I am afraid, and I shall be able to leave very little. You understand that, do you not?"

"Darling Aunt Selina," cried Edith impulsively, burying her face in the older woman's ample bosom, "you are going to live forever, that's why I am not worrying about getting married." She was deeply touched with the gentle reproof. She had expected a most unpleasant scene. Lady Rokeby, with a weary

smile, kissed her good-night affectionately."

over the Bow River bridge and presently came to a stop at the Calgary station platform. Dick, all excitement, made his tortuous way towards the rear of the train amongst the incoming passengers. As he reached the first sleeping car, Mary had already alighted and found herself enveloped in Dick's brawny arms. His parents finally appeared in the vestibule of the car and merry greetings were exchanged, culminating in vigourous handshaking, embracing and kissing when they at last descended to the platform. They proceeded to the hotel for lunch, the porter taking charge of their bags and belongings.

"Upon my word, Dick," his father exclaimed, "you

do look uncommonly fit."

"I feel every bit as fit as I look, Governor. And you, dear old Mother, how did you stand the trip?"

"I didn't mind it very much. In fact, I found it most interesting and I have had a thorough rest after

the strenuous period of packing."

They were soon seated in the tasteful grill room of the hotel, with its hand-wrought electric light fixtures, leaded window panes, enormous fireplace and glazed floor, partaking of a well-cooked and well-served lunch.

"Am I supposed to be pioneering?" asked Mary, innocently looking around. "If you ask me, this seems more like the Carleton than the frontier. Dick dar-

ling, I am afraid you are a bit of a fraud."

"Look here, old man, I am almost beginning to agree with Mary. This place seems the last word in comfort to me."

"So it is, good people," replied Dick calmly. "This is for the tourists and transients and the people with money. Just wait until you see the shack you people

are going to spend the rest of your days in and you will want to take the next train home, which, of course,

you can't do."

"Well, my boy, I expect you are chaffing us. We are not anticipating very much, so we probably won't be deeply disappointed," volunteered Mrs. Anstruther. They had by this time finished lunch and were sipping their coffee.

"What time does the train leave for Clearwater,

Dick, or do we stay here over night?"

"We do not stay here over night and the train leaves any time you are ready," replied Dick. "We are motoring out in our own little 'tin lizzie'. But we will check some of your bags to Clearwater to give you more room. They will be there to-night."

"Dick, you are a veritable magician. I am inclined to believe that we are just beginning to really live,"

cried Mary with delight.

The car was parked outside the hotel and they were soon comfortably seated ready to start on their long trip. Martha occupied the front seat with Dick.

"Supposing we have a preliminary look at the old town first," suggested Dick. This plan was enthusiastically approved by everybody. Dick took them through the principal business streets, pointed out the great department stores, paid a visit to the manufacturing section and, on the way out, showed them part of the residential district. The Sage was frankly delighted with everything he saw. The whole place struck him as solid and substantial. He was mentally revising his preconceived ideas of the "cow"-town.

The main roads at that time of the year were in excellent condition and the "flivver" had evidently been thoroughly overhauled and tuned up. The country was beautiful and the family loved every minute of the trip. The possession of a motor car was a new experience, which no doubt added considerably to their

enjoyment. Dick explained, apologetically, that the car was a strictly business investment and everyone agreed that it was a wise one. Mary was anxious to learn how to run it at once. Late in the afternoon they reached Clearwater, inquired at the post office for mail, and were soon following the well-worn prairie trail to the settlement.

Dick made the crest of the last range of hills and stopped the car. A magnificent panorama was spread out before them. Below, the valley of Windigo Creek, and, in the distance, an imposing group of buildings, with a background of trees. Dick's heart was beating a tattoo as they all beheld their future home. He himself had never seen it to greater advantage. The afternoon sun was illuminating the distant hilltops and, here and there, one caught a glimpse of the creek as it wound its way down the valley, the clear water sparkling in the sunlight. There was a tense pause as each one mentally devotired the lovely sight.

"Oh, Dick," Mrs. Anstruther exclaimed, ecstatically, "this is beyond anything I ever dreamed of. What a perfectly lovely spot! And are those the buildings?"

"Yes, dear," replied Dick proudly, "I hope you will not be disappointed in the house. I am sure you

will find it fairly comfortable."

"I know we shall. And I am certain we shall all

love this country."

"Well, as far as I am concerned, everything is so absolutely different from what I expected, that I am just about prepared for anything in the way of surprises," said Mary. "I suppose when we get to the house, we will find it is some enchanted castle Dick has contrived to provide for us."

"I rather think you will find it a trifle more convenient than an ancient castle, Mary. However, we have feasted our eyes long enough on the landscape and we had better get home and rustle a cup of tea."

Dick started the car again and commenced the descent into the valley. The Sage had been a silent

observer.

"I want to compliment you on your choice, old man," he said. "I am going to suspend final judgment until I have seen my new library; but so far you have fairly taken my breath away. Why are people living out on that flat plain land we passed to-day when places such

as this are available?"

"I am afraid that the average settler is a very materialistic person. He is more interested in the yield of wheat per acre than in scenery. Of course, one cannot overlook the fact that the land here is not as valuable for productive purposes as the level prairie to the east of us, but I rather think we can afford to make some concessions in that matter. All it really involves is to adjust our plan of farming to our surroundings and we shall do almost as well. Besides, the price per acre here is not so high, so that we get more land for the same money."

"I agree absolutely, Dick," replied his father. "It is difficult to put a monetary value on beautiful and congenial surroundings. We can certainly afford to make concessions there. The whole point really is whether we can make a comfortable living here. No-

thing else matters much."

"I am in hopes we can, Governor; at least we are staking almost everything on that theory and I really fail to see why we should not. Of course, I hope to do more than that. I should like to see us increase our capital as well as making a living."

They were now nearing the buildings and occasional gasps of surprise and pleasure, emanating from his mother and sister, cheered Dick enormously. The labourer opened the gate into the enclosure and the

car rolled up to the front door. Mary could not wait for the others, but at once started on a personal exploration. Dick, however, overtook her.

"Possess your soul in patience, old girl. This is going to be a personally conducted trip," he said laugh-

ingly.

"All right, Mr. Cook," she replied. "But do hurry. I am dying of impatience to see the enchanted castle."

They all entered the living room and Dick explained everything he had done to it. They then proceeded to the kitchen, where Martha was already making active preparations for tea. It looked immaculate and cheerful and there was a chorus of approbation.

"Now, Governor," said Dick, "we are about to enter the holiest of holies. Prepare to behold your library!" Mr. Anstruther looked around the room apprais-

ingly. He was evidently pleased.

"This is delightful, Dick, and I thoroughly appreciate all you have done to make it comfortable. But," he added, "that large sitting room with the very comfy fireplace is going to look so attractive to me, that I shall often feel tempted to forsake my lonely retreat. If the bedroom accommodation is anything like as excellent as we have seen so far, I am afraid I shall not be able to muster up any alarming degree of compassion for this exiled family."

"Then let us go upstairs at once and complete our survey," replied Dick with a beaming face. "We might

as well know the worst."

The bathroom fairly threw the entire family into ecstacies. This was beyond anything they had ima-

gined.

"And there is the cautious Dick," cried Mary,
"who was not quite sure whether we should spend a
couple of hundred pounds on this gem of a bathroom.
Why, I think this is worth the total amount I put into
the business. Dick, I bow down before your genius in

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the deepest humility. But you have missed your vocation. You would make your fortune as an architect and interior decorator and judging by the spotless appearance of everything here, I believe you could even make your way in life as a house-maid."

Everybody laughed at Mary's absurdities and happily proceeded with the inspection of the bedrooms,

which met with enthusiastic approval.

"Now, children, this has all been most delightful," observed Mrs. Anstruther, "but there is much to be done unpacking the linen and things, getting beds up and settling down generally. Martha will have the tea ready by now, so we will adjourn to the sitting room and afterwards we must set to work seriously."

"All right, Mater, lead on!" replied Dick gaily.

Martha presently brought in the tea which was partaken of smidst an animated discussion on the plan of campaign to be followed in getting settled. The Sage was unceremoniously set to work to unpack and arrange his own books, while the rest of the family undertook the task of unpacking the silver, glassware, ornaments, etc. As fast as boxes were emptied, they were removed to the shed loft and the rubbish cleared away. Everyone toiled, with a brief pause for the evening meal, and retired to bed at a late hour to enjoy the first night of absolute comfort since they had left England.

The following day the task proceeded energetically. The sewing machine was requisitioned and Mrs. Anstruther began making up the curtains. Dick, busy with hammer and screw-driver, put up the rods. On Sunday morning everyone sat down after breakfast with a sigh of relief. The work was nearing completion. The downstairs rooms were practically finished. And what a comfortable nest it was! Dick could hardly believe that this was the old, ramshackle "castle".

What a change from the day of his first visit!

Billy Purdom and his wife called in their best bib and tucker and Mrs. Anstruther was profuse in her gratitude to Mrs. Purdom for all the help she had rendered Dick. Mary had taken a great fancy to this excellent woman and had a long private conference with her on the subject of chicken raising. The Sage pronounced Billy a thoroughly worthy, decent chap. The Purdoms, of course, had looked in awe and admiration upon all the silver, cut glass, pictures and ornaments, and the meal Martha had served, quite up to her old standard, had seemed a revelation to them.

Billy was a little dubious about it all as they drove home. Of course they had money. But that would be a pretty expensive establishment for Dick to keep up. The mother and sister, however, seemed levelheaded enough. Mr. Anstruther, of course, was an encumbrance, although a fine, well-spoken gentleman.

"Well, Jennie," he said deliberately, "we have seen a good many of such folks come a cropper, eh?"

"We have that, Billy, but somehow these don't seem like the kind that couldn't pick things up. The girl is fine and the mother seems a sensible enough body. And, of course, Dick we know." Billy grunted and they proceeded in silence, characteristic of prairie driving.

Mary was having a very serious conversation with Dick.

"Before we left home I read a lot of father's new books on farming, Dick, and some of them enlarge specially on poultry raising and I have become very much interested. I really don't see why I should not learn this end of the business and take charge of it. From what I have seen here, the poultry just shift for themselves and they seem to be of rather nondescript breeding. Would it not pay to get some good stock now and during the winter I could study up so as to be

ready to branch out next spring when the breeding

season commences?"

"To tell the honest truth, Sis, I have never been specially interested in the chicken business. I suppose that is a woman's job. Certainly, if you care to take it on, there is no reason on earth why you shouldn't," replied Dick, secretly pleased that Mary was beginning to show an active interest in the farm.

"You will have to put a little money into it, Dick, and give me a proper poultry house, which we can add to as we go along and need more accommodation. They tell me at the village that there is a splendid demand for fresh eggs and that many of the farmers' wives east of the railway keep their grocery accounts

paid up with egg sales."

"I know that to be an actual fact, Mary. I expect the Purdoms, with their few chickens, spend preciously

little cash on groceries."

"Mrs. Purdom told me so the other day," replied Mary. "She is going to get her husband to build her an up-to-date chicken house as soon as ever they can afford it. Father has sent for some publications issued by the Department of Agriculture on poultry raising. We will read them together when they come."

"Right you are. Every little helps and it would be a splendid thing if you could work up a paying business in that line. I'll build you a poultry house during the winter. It won't cost much. I expect you can get full directions from Edmonton. They are sure

to have all sorts of information there."

"Dick, I should just love to feel that I was really useful and I do believe that here is a chance for me," said Mary enthusiastically. "I am going to read up on chickens. I shall devour everything in print I can lay my hands on and, to begin with, I am going to take charge of those homeless hens of yours and see that they are properly fed and looked after."

"Consider yourself poultry director-in-chief from this moment, old girl. If the hens don't lay now, I shall know who to blame. Seriously, I do believe there is an opportunity to develop this into something worth while and I am sure that you can do it. I'll give you all the help I can, but must confess that I don't know the first thing about hens or the ways of hens. So good luck to you,"

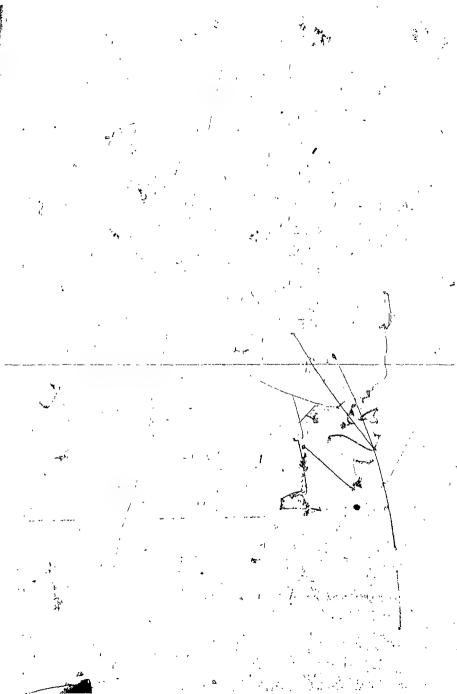
The following week saw the Anstruther family comfortably installed in the "castle" and great progress was also being made with the re-arrangement of the outbuildings. Billy Purdom's brother, Wesley, arrived immediately before harvest and passed muster satisfactorily. A room was fitted up for him in Dick's old shack, which now served the dual purposes of garage

and "bunk" house.

A large quantity of hay was safely gathered and the grain crops made one of the historic yields of Western Canada. Dick had had the land worked on shares and, therefore, only received part of the grain, but his proportion gave him a very satisfactory return in money as well as his feed and seed grain for the following season. He had contrived to get an additional hundred acres broken and had two hundred acres of land summerfallowed, which brought his crop area for the following year up to three hundred acres. There was no apparent reason why he should not contemplate the future with courage and confidence.



BOOK II
THE VENTURE



# CHAPTER ELEVEN

Struther family became famous in Canadian agricultural annals as one of the greatest crop seasons in the history of the West. Rain seemed to fall at the exact period required, and the days were warm and conducive to rapid growth. Every farmer was jubilant and the war demand from Europe almost insured a record price for wheat, which in turn would favourably affect the value of all other products of the farm. Dick was naturally on pins and needles. So much depended on success during the first year of their venture. Would destructive hail storms leave them untouched? Would this magnificent weather continue?

The family had by this time settled down to life in Western Canada as if to the manner born. Mrs. Anstruther had full scope for her surprising genius for household management. She had acquired the art of buttermaking to a very creditable degree. It was a new experience to have unlimited milk, cream, eggs and poultry for family use without having to pay for it on delivery. This consciousness of plenty was extremely agreeable and reassuring. It lent an air of

independence to existence.

The Sage had vastly surprised everybody. He had literally made good his intention to study the multitude of problems confronting the western farmer. He had accumulated stacks of technical and popular literature published by the various provincial governments of Canada and the State Experiment Stations in the United States, which had cheerfully been mailed to him at his request. He seemed readily to absorb and digest all this information, with the result that he was gradually becoming a walking encyclopædia on farming topics. His knowledge was, of course, as yet purely

theoretical and not, therefore, to be taken very seriously by his family. While he took no active part in the farm work he was always willing and anxious to lend a helping hand on occasions. He had taken entire charge of the garden and now derived his exercise solely from this work, whereas in England he had depended upon more or less aimless walking. He was becoming an enthusiast and insisted upon showing all visitors over his little domain. If he ever regretted their move from England, certainly there was no evidence whatever of his harbouring any such disturbing thoughts.

Mary was a success. No possible mistake about that. She had entered into her poultry venture with vim and energy and had displayed no little intelligence. Dick had not been permitted a moment's rest the previous winter until he had completed a commodious poultry house, after a plan upon which the whole family had spent many interested hours. It was absolutely the last word in structures of that sort, which does not necessarily imply that it had cost a lot of money. By

no manner of means.

It was, as a matter of fact, a very simple, elongated wooden affair, facing the south. There were no glassed windows in the front, but merely canvas covered window frames, which provided for ample ventilation. Even when the thermometer went away down below zero in the latter part of the winter, "Biddy" seemed to be quite comfortable in her airy quarters and continued to contribute to the family egg supply. There were trap nests and removable roosts and dropping boards. But it would be impossible to do justice to all the wonders of Mary's poultry plant within permissible limits.

Wesley Purdom, Dick's "hired man" and Billy's brother, was leisurely finishing the chores and the Anstruther family was sitting on the verandah, the men smoking their pipes. It was a beautiful, calm

summer evening following a hot day. The delicate perfume from a nearby grove of silver-leafed Buffalo Willows filled the air agreeably. They had just finished supper, after a hard day's work, and were fully entitled to sit with hands folded admiring the landscape. They had, following the custom of the country, long ago discarded the late dinner, transferring that meal to the middle of the day.

"I ought to take those two mares up the valley to the 'Lazy H' ranch to-morrow. One of them has been in season for a couple of days. Billy urges me strongly to use that big Clyde stallion of theirs. But I just hate to take the day off with so much to be done," remarked

Dick.

It will be observed that the family had become quite callous to free and open discussion on topics of animal sex and breeding, which would scarcely have been considered quite good form in days past.

"If there is anything I can do for you here, Dick,

just say the word," replied the Sage.

Occupation that is good for you just now in that garden of yours. By the way, how are you going to occupy

yourself next winter?"

"Oh, give yourself no worry on that score. I shall walk about a bit, help Mary with her chickens, and read rather a little more than I have done lately. Do you know, I really never felt better in my life than I do now. I was undoubtedly beginning to get a trifle stuffy and musty in England. If you ask me, this move came just about at the right time."

"I am beginning to think it did, governor. You positively look ten years younger than you did at home. And I don't think mother has suffered any either," and, turning to Mrs. Anstruther, "you do seem more active and energetic than you appeared to be at home, Mater.

"I hope you are not overdoing it?"

# The Fruits of the Earth

"No, I don't think I am. Of course, I am always busy, but I enjoy every moment of the day. Do you know, children, this is beginning to appeal to me as a real home, as the sort of surroundings human beings were intended to have. I never felt quite so much at home in any of the places we ever rented in England as I do in this little house of our very own. And, of course, it is simply lovely to have both of you children with me."

"Darling mother," cried Mary, "that is a sweet compliment. As far as I am concerned, I have not an atom of regret at having left dear old England: I have never been so interested in anything as I am in those blessed chicks of mine. Have you seen my latest hatch? Nine out of thirteen and as lively as crickets. I call that pretty good luck. Come over and have a look at

them, all of you."

There was no arguing the point with Mary and the family presently trailed dutifully across to a small enclosure where she kept the newly-hatched chicks. Mary picked up a couple of the tiny feathered balls against the angry protest of the mother hen. She held them admiringly at arm's length, stroked their soft bodies against her cheek and gently replaced them, much to the relief of the hen. Mary, after the manner of the enthusiast, guided them from one interesting spot to another, dilating on the changes she had in view and the extensions she felt certain must be made in her poultry kingdom before long. They all listened good-naturedly to her explanations and finally strolled back to the verandah and the comfortable chairs.

Wesley had finished his chores and retired to his room for a final pipe before turning in. Dick entered and sat down on the bed.

"We have put up all the hay and green feed I figured on, Wesley, and a little more besides. I have been thinking that we ought to begin looking around for some more stock to winter."

"I was talking to Billy about the cattle situation," replied Wesley, "and he seems to think that prices are pretty steep just now. Perhaps it might be wiser to wait a bit."

"Of course, prices are high, but with the scarcity of cattle in Europe it does look as if there would be small danger of any considerable slump for several years."

Billy has been raising cattle here for a good many years and it can't hurt to have a talk with him before you decide."

Dick walked back to the house, meditatively sucking his pipe. He had, as a matter of fact, an offer of a fine bunch of grade Shorthorn yearlings. The price asked was about equal to that of three-year-olds prior to the war, but it looked like a good bargain in view of present quotations. He would have the privilege of culling out ten per cent of the whole herd, which would leave him a hundred and fifty head of mixed steers and heifers. Wesley would assist in culling. He would make few mistakes. There was ample feed put up to winter them and, as there were several vacant sections in the hills, the summer grazing presented no particular problem. He could simply brand them and turn them out.

The only problem was the financial one. The deal involved about nine thousand dollars and he had only three thousand available for investment. It was worth taking a considerable risk, however, as three-year-olds were selling freely at around a hundred and twenty-five dollars per head. The carrying cost would not amount to much as very little extra labour would be needed. The danger of losses with healthy youngsters like that was hardly worth considering. They were flong yearlings in a little over a year and a half they should bring about nineteen thousand dollars.

### The Fruits of the Earth

There would be a net profit of seven or eight thousand. It looked enormously attractive. He would certainly take the earliest opportunity to sound his bank in Clearwater as to whether there was any chance of bank-

ing co-operation in handling the deal.

Early next morning Dick started for the "Lazy H", riding one great lumbering Clyde mare and leading another. It was slow travelling and it was noon before he reached his destination. He had dinner with the manager, a hard-headed Scotch farmer with a Cornish name, who had lived on the creek for years. Mr. Tremaine congratulated Dick on the many improvements he had made on his farm and inquired, interest-

edly, after the various members of the family.

Dick broached the cattle question to him. He frankly regarded existing prices of cattle as entirely artificial and felt positive that they could not be maintained, but agreed with the view that the market might be safe for a couple of years at least. He did not see how it could be otherwise. Dick felt encouraged. While not wishing to run any serious risks, he did not mean to miss opportunities. The risk in this case was admittedly remote. He would borrow as much as he could and when the market was favourable he would sell the steers, repay the bank and retain those beautiful heifers to give him his start in a breeding bunch.

After the noon meal the following day Dick drove to Clearwater to see the banker. Mary accompanied him as she had a case of eggs to deliver at the store and wanted to make some purchases. The local manager of the Federal Bank, Lester Hill, greeted him pleasantly. Hill was on friendly terms with the whole family and often used to run out to the "castle" on summer evenings

or for a week-end.

"What is troubling you, Dick," he asked jovially. "No one ever comes to see me unless he is in some sort of trouble, you know."

"I am not exactly in any particular trouble just now. but I have a deal up for some cattle with the 'Bar X' people and want to have a talk with you about finances."

"Well, what is involved, how much have you got

and how much do you want?"

Dick outlined the proposal, briefly, and stated his requirements. Hill informed him that his head office was most anxious to promote animal husbandry amongst their customers and that the bank was willing to go very far indeed to make advances for such a purpose. Dick prepared a statement of his assets and liabilities and Hill explained to him that, as the loan was above the amount he could deal with personally, it would have to go before his head office for approval. He would, however, submit the application at once, with his strong recommendation and would phone him the result in a very few days. He did not doubt that the bank would make the advance he required.

"I have made up my mind to make a plunge," Dick confessed to Mary on the way home. "I have just made an application to the bank for a loan of five thou-

sand dollars to buy cattle with."

"You know, Dick, I am a bit of a plunger myself," admitted Mary. "I want acres and acres for my poultry and I want to count them by thousands instead of

by hundreds."

"Of course, I ought not to take any chances whatever; but, hang it all, one can't just stagnate. I am afraid the country has something to do with it. gambling spirit seems to predominate in everything almost. Farming itself is the great original gamble. You stake your labour and capital against the possibilities of rain and favourable weather conditions. The oftener you win, the greater becomes the agricultural reputation of the country." Pioneering is, I suppose, all a product of the sporting instinct."

we are bound to take a chance now and again. If we don't, we will never get anywhere and, Dick," added Mary earnestly, "I do want to see us succeed here. We can never go back to the old circumscribed existence in England again—at least, I don't believe I could. Besides, if we failed here we would not have the income to do it. If I have to work for a living, Dick, I much prefer to work for myself than to have others 'boss' me around."

"We will not anticipate anything of that sort, old woman," replied Dick, smilingly. "I shall certainly go on with my cattle deal if I find I can finance it. I could hardly lose the capital investment and even if I should be disappointed in the profits, there would be no very

great harm done."

They reached home in time for afternoon tea, a custom Mrs. Anstruther had insisted upon preserving in their prairie home, much to everybody's delight. Mary brought in the mail and sorted it out.

"Here is a letter for you, Dick. I am awfully sorry I forgot to give it to you in town, but I became so interested in our business talk that it completely escaped

my mind."

The envelope was addressed in Edith's clear, bold handwriting and evidently came from France. So Edith was at the front.

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#### CHAPTER TWELVE

To MIGHT as well be confessed, first as last, that Edith had never carried into effect her heroic determination to write Dick and definitely end everything. It is difficult to explain why she had failed to take this step. Perhaps she feared to jeopardise their friendship. Or perhaps she, unconsciously, hoped that through some miracle or other Dick might yet return to England and assume a position that satisfied her ideas of fitness. Or she might have had a dozen other reasons for drifting long as she had been doing writing him at uncertain periods and eagerly looking forward to his very prompt and very interesting replies.

Dick had heard from her about once a month, and in his letters had given her a very circumstantial history of the Anstruther enterprise in Western Canada, generously interspersed with comments concerning his hopes and ambitions for the future. It might have been Dick's versatile pen or Mary's astounding declaration that she actually loved the country and that they were all most happy and most comfortable, but it must be recorded that Edith had become genuinely interested in this preposterous adventure, which, once upon a time, had struck her as an apt sequel to that favourite of her childhood The Swiss Family Robinson.

Dick wasted no time in reaching the seclusion of his room. In fact, he took the stairs three at a time. The letter opened with the hackneyed salutation "My dear Dick". Evidently they had not made much progress towards greater intimacy since Dick left England. Edith wrote:

Edith wrote:

You will see from the postmark that I am in France. I have been trying for some time to get across. Life in London palled on me. The artificial gaiety

became oppressive and I simply could not stand it any longer. Aunt Selina was very sensible about it and sent me off with her blessing. I had rather expected opposition in that quarter, but the dear old lady generally comes to the scratch when the emergency arises.

"How splendid that the family has buckled down to the new life in Canada. It must be a great comfort to you to feel that they show so little regret at having left England. Mary, in a recent letter, almost made me believe that she had no intention of ever leaving Canada. She has evidently found her vocation with her chickens and things. . . I am working very hard; grinding, physical labour, but I like it. I feel I am at least doing something real in this awful struggle. You, poor boy, did your share and now you are helping with food production. Every one here says that food will win the war in the end; so cheer up. . . ."

It was a nice chummy letter, but it studiously avoided personalities. Dick always experienced a feeling of disappointment after reading these missives. His own replies generally followed the same course, however. He felt, instinctively, that the time was inopportune for pressing the great question which was continually agitating his mind. He was trusting to luck to give him an appropriate opening and his disappointment grew as the occasion was delayed from month to month. But he apparently accepted the situation philosophically enough. Edith was now doing hard work at the front. She had grown tired of London. Surely he was entitled to take a grain of comfort out of this. Things might, after all, be coming his way.

The same evening Dick had a session in the library with the Sage. He felt that his father was entitled to know his plans for stocking the place with cattle and he hoped to gain his concurrence.

"The position just now is that we owe half the purchase price on the home section, forty-five hundred

dollars. We have paid cash for most of our supplies, but will owe about four hundred dollars by the fall. Then I have the new breaking to pay for—450 acres at four dollars per acre. Wages now due and including harvest expenses will run up to another thousand dollars. That makes a total of approximately four thousand five hundred dollars required to see us through."

"Very well. What have you in sight to meet this,"

asked the Sage.

"We have two hundred and fifty acres of grain crop, which looks top hole just now. All the oats and barley we shall need for our own use, the wheat will be for the market. I figure on forty bushels to the acre. Billy tells me it will go all of that. That would give us about 6500 bushels to sell. The price now is about a dollar a bushel at Clearwater or sixty-five hundred dollars. On that basis we would have a surplus of two thousand dollars and I have another three thousand left in our bank account."

"That looks to me like a very prosperous state of affairs, Dick," commented the Sage. "We must not forget that most of the outlay that you have mentioned is really capital investment, such as land payment, implements, breaking new land, etc. Really, I think you are to be congratulated on the way you have

managed everything."

"I am glad you think so, Dad. Of course, we must not overlook the fact that we have had a most favourable season. I can't take all the credit, you know. But what do you think of the proposed cattle investment? Should we risk assuming this liability?"

"Off hand, it looks perfectly safe to me. You say you have feed and pasture in abundance, and it does seem a pity not to utilize it profitably. The only problem appears to be whether the price of cattle will keep up for a couple of years or, at least, will not recede

to any extent. I can't myself see any possibility of prices becoming demoralized. In fact, with the terrible depletion of live-stock in Europe just now, one would naturally expect prices to increase as the war goes on, and after the war, Europe is bound to stock up her breeding herds again."

"That is the way everybody has the live-stock market sized up, governor, and it looks like a very safe speculation to me. I want to borrow most of the purchase price from the bank, as I propose to keep a cash balance available for current expenses next year. I believe in paying cash for our living and operating

costs as far as we are able to."

"A sound principle indeed, Dick, which I should advise you to stick to through life. Yea, by all means, buy those cattle if you think the price is fair and just. On that point, of course, you must seek competent advice."

"Well then, we will consider that matter settled," replied Dick. "If the bank will stake me, I will make the purchase; if not, we must reconsider the matter."

"Dick, have you ever looked into the question of

irrigation," asked the Sage.

"No, Dad, I have not, particularly. There are one or two small systems up the valley that seem to produce

a wealth of feed. Why do you aak?"

"I have been doing a lot of reading on that subject lately," said Mr. Anstruther, pointing to a formidable stack of pamphlets and books on his table, and I have become extraordinarily interested. Last week when Mary drove mother and myself to the Lasy H' to call, Mr. Tremaine took me all over their irrigated meadows. What he told me was the second crop of alfalfa stood knee-deep. He expected a total yield of four tons to the acre for the season. I asked him why we could not do the same and he replied that the original owner of this property actually had plans made to irrigate

two hundred acres of land here. The engineer who made the survey told Mr. Tremaine that it seemed a very feasible and economical project to build."

"Well done, Dad. That is certainly helpful information. I wonder if Mr. Tremaine knows the name of the engineer so that we could get a copy of those plans?"

"I asked him about that, too, but he told me that this man had left the country. However, he advised me to get in touch with the Dominion Irrigation Department in Calgary, as they might know something about it. At any rate that office would have to pass on any application we made for a license to divert water."

"What do we need a license for, Dad?" asked Dick. "The creek runs right through our own property.

Surely we can use all the water we want."

"That is just what I thought, but Mr. Tremaine explained that all water in the prairie provinces was some years ago by law declared to be the property of the Crown. In other words, they abolished riparian rights. The government then measured the flow of streams and they now issue licenses against each stream, but not in excess of its flow. That protects every license holder to the extent of the volume of water he is entitled to. It seems a very fair and efficient system to me."

Then somebody above us could get a license for the total flow and we would not even have enough left to water our stock?" asked Dick with consternation.

"No, that case is also provided for by law. Enough water must always be left in the creek to cover all requirements for domestic and stock watering purposes. But they could certainly deprive you of the use of any water for irrigation."

"If that is, the case," ejaculated Dick, "we had

better take some action in the matter soon."

Your crafty and accomplished parent has already done so. I wrote the department and here is their very

prompt reply," answered the Sage, handing Dick an imposing foolscap envelope. Dick read the letter.

"I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter. ... asking for authority to divert water from Windigo Creek for the irrigation of ... There would appear to be sufficient water unappropriated to irrigate 200 acres of land and a note has been made of your application. I may inform you that preliminary plans were filed by the previous owner of your land and are approved and on record here. All that is now necessary is for you to file formal application in your own name, referring to these plans. I enclose the necessary blank forms for that purpose

"By all means, let us get those forms filled out and mailed at once. That's going to save us a pot of money. Dad, I wish you would run up to Calgary and take the forms with you and get a copy of the plans."

"All right. Mary can drive me into Clearwater tomorrow to meet the train and I will do the best I can.
I will also get the name of a reliable engineer and see
if we can get an estimate of the cost. Of course, I expect they will give us reasonable time to proceed with
construction. Judging by the 'Lazy H' system I
should hardly think it would run into any enormous
amount. The pamphlets here estimate the average
cost of small systems at about ten dollars per acre."

"That would be two thousand dollars," replied Dick, dubiously. "I doubt whether we could finance that amount this year. It seems to take no end of capital to get this place running right."

"Still, my boy, it does look as if spending this amount would be in the nature of crop insurance. There can't be any sound argument against doing it. I almost think it would pay me to sell some more of my securities to raise this money."

"For Heaven's sake, Dad, don't even suggest dipping into the remainder of your nest egg to furnish additional capital for this place," pleaded Dick. "My responsibility is great enough as it is."

"I realize that fully," replied the Sage, "but can we afford not to do it?"

"Upon my word, Dad, I do believe you are developing into a desperate adventurer. I depended upon you to check any indiscretions on my part and now it looks as if I have to put the brakes on both you and

Mary, with her poultry castles in the air."

"On your own showing, Dick, the cost of living on this farm is a mere trifle compared with what we spent in England. There could apparently be no danger of our not having enough to eat and drink. While irrigation may not be essential to crop production in normal years here, the two hundred irrigated acres would constitute a certainty every year. All we have to do then is to keep clear of debt, so that we can never be dispossessed. We would have the place and have a living as well."

"All that sounds fine, governor. I can't argue, sgainst it; but socidents do happen and I want to guard

against the very worst that could befall us!

"That is quite admirable, my boy, but reducing the capital I now have left by a couple of thousand dollars is neither here nor there. It wouldn't keet in anyway. Besides, I still have my little passion to fall back on, but if anything happened to me anglisdversity evertook you here, I should feel confident that you and Mary could take care of your mother. In any event I mean to have an irrigated garden next year."

"So that is where the shoe pinches," exclaimed Dick. "You want to drive us all into the poor-house in order that you may grow prize cabbages. Well, Dad," he continued, reflectively, "two hundred acres under irrigation would, of course, be a God-send, no use

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denying that, and you insist on going shead with this plan of yours I Im not going to object, but the very first two thousand I can lay my hands on will go into Victory Bonds and be added to your capital. I mean to play this game safely as far as I am able to."

The following day the Sage proceeded to Calgary and during the afternoon telephoned that he would be delayed a couple of days. A further message reached them later on to the effect that he had obtained the necessary authority to proceed with construction and was bringing a copy of the plans back with him and also an engineer, who would go over the ground and give them an estimate of cost. Mary met the train and drove them to the farm.

After supper the family foregathered as usual on the pleasant verandah. The women busy with fancy work and knitting and the men lazily smoking their pipes. Bob Simpson, the engineer, proved a bit of a character and regaled them with tales of early pioneering days. The conversation drifted around to the "Lazy H" irri-It appeared that Simpson had congation system. structed this system many years ago, before Mr. Tre-This, of course, reminded maine became manager. Almost anything would. He was in him of a story. fact an incorrigible and notorious raconteur. In countries of more ancient civilization, men seldom live in the past until they grow old and feeble. In the new West, comparatively young men often qualify as "old timers" and exhibit all the garrulity and peculiar characteristics of the chimney corner oracle of older Simpson was one of the characters. In his drawling voice he explained that Tremaine's predecessor, Steve Wilson, was a bachelor of distinctly convivial During early prohibition days, Steve was apparently always able to get a liquor "permit" and contrived to keep a plentiful stock of Scotch on hand.

The "Lazy H" was, consequently, a favourite haunt for

cow-men for miles around.

"I drove out there from Calgary," Simpson related, "to make the surveys and the night I arrived, the 'gang' paid a visit to the ranch. Steve got very drunk during the evening and finally passed out completely. Harry Sykes, a practical joker, who could think up more deviltry than any other man I ever knew, gazed at him, thoughtfully and pityingly, as he sat huddled up on his chair, head resting on the table, a picture of abject misery and helplessness. Those who knew Sykes were wondering what he was up to. 'Boys,' he finally said, 'this won't do at all, at all. Steve don't seem to carry his liquor like he oughter. And then that pore, broken leg of his. I declare, it's a shame'.

"Broken leg?" asked Doc Turner, who was staying overnight after attending a woman up the creek. 'How

do you get that?"

"Sure, Doc, that pore fellow's leg is broken right enough. Bad, too, I reckon. What you sawbones call compound fracture. Jest lend a hand and let's get the pore creature to bed and 'tended to.'

"All assisted in the process of getting Steve carried upstairs and undressed. He was absolutely dead to the

world.

"Now, Doc,' said Harry, 'that bone has got to be set, pronto. Good job you're here. Don't know what in Sam Hill we should have done without you. Steve

always does travel in luck.'

"The Doctor began to see the joke and grinned appreciatively. There was no plaster of paris to be had, but the prairie substitute was available in plenty. A huge bundle of newspapers were put to soak in warm water and splints were made to fit the leg. A cast of papier-mache was quickly completed and wrapped in the best professional manner with dressings from the doctor's bag. It was a very workmanlike job. The Chinese

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cook was solemnly told that Mr. Wilson had met with a bad accident and everyone went to bed in the early hours of the morning. Harry Sykes camped with Steve.

"The following morning Wilson woke up with a

thundering headache.

"Hey, Harry, hand us a drink, you old scoundrel.

My tongue feels like a nutmeg grater.'

"'Can't be done, Steve, old man,' said Sykes soothingly. 'Just lie nice and quiet. Your milk will soon be here.'

"'Milk be damned,' roared Steve. 'Get that jug

quick.

"'Now, now, don't get excited, boy. You are on a milk diet just now. But we will pull you through all right. No fear.'

"'What the devil are you gassing about, you old

coyote?'

"Bad accident, Steve. Just look at your pore leg. And for God's sake, lie quiet and you'll be all right in next to no time."

"Steve lifted the blanket, beheld his bandaged leg

and looked at Sykes, utterly bewildered.

"'You tried to climb down them stairs, Steve, and tumbled down. That's what done it.'

"'Great Scot,' ejaculated Steve, 'is it bad?'

"'Is it hurtin' much, old man?' asked Sykes, soli-

citously. 'Bad break, but we'll pull you around.'

"'It hurts like the very devil,' Steve moaned, crestfallen. Imagination and the tight bandage were getting in their deadly work.

"It is just the joinin' pains, old man; it'll soon knit and you will be as good as ever,' said Sykes, sym-

pathetically.

"'Well, Harry, that sure settles me on the boose question. Never again or I'm a Dutchman.'

"'I allus told you to leave the stuff alone, Steve.'

"'You infernal old tank, you never told me anything of the sort. Fat chance of getting much booze when you're around."

"Here is your breakfast, Steve,' said Sykes benevolently, as he took a glass of milk from the worried

Chinaman.

"'And is this cat's food all I am going to have?"

asked Steve, in a subdued voice.

"'We have got a touch of the fever, old timer. Now, take your grub and settle down. Talkin' is

powerful bad for you.'

"Presently Bill Douglass entered the room with a tumbler filled with prairie flowers, which he ceremoniously placed on the table, Steve's face registering deep gratitude. Such delicate and tender compassion evidently touched him deeply. It took an occasion such as this to prove the depth of these good fellows' friendship. Steve's soul was stirred to the quick!

"'And how is the patient this morning?' he asked

cheerfully, but with the proper degree of anxiety.

"'Hurts like blazes, Bill. Good job the Doc was

"Now you have said it, Steve. God only knows what we should have done without him. It almost

seems like providence.'

"During the day Steve's friends called, one by one, while the others were standing on the stairs, listening to the conversation and holding their sides in an agony

of suppressed laughter.

"He had never received so much sympathy and attention in his life before and was beginning to thoroughly enjoy his new role as an interesting patient. No trouble was too great for these excellent fellows. Steve was waited on hand and foot. He confessed, in a moment of bursting emotion, that it was almost worth being the victim of a bad accident and suffering tortures to probe the depths of real friendship. He would

never, never forget all they had done for him. The doctor, almost hourly, and with anxious mien, took his temperature and felt his pulse. He must insist upon absolute quiet and perfect rest and everything would come out right. 'We can only do our best for our old friend. The final result is in higher hands' he conceded, with a sigh. The atmosphere in the sick room was becoming more and more oppressive.

"Harry Sykes was fairly moved to tears by Steve's fretful complaints about the terrible pain in his leg. Time was no object in those halycon days and the gang naturally stayed around for the week-end to cheer the sick man. The doctor, however, had to leave, but, in an audible voice, gave the most minute directions as to the care of the patient. He solemnly promised to return if any complications should develop.

"By Sunday evening all Steve's whiskey had been consumed to the last bitter drop, and it was decided to put an end to the farce. A note was written to Steve in Harry Sykes' best form, telling him of the hoax played upon him and expressing the united opinion of his friends and well-wishers that now, when there was no more whiskey left in the house, was an opportune time for him to turn over a new leaf, as he had so earnestly promised them he would. Amidst much laughter this note was given to the Chinaman, with strict instructions not to give it to Steve until they had gathered their ponies and were ready to leave.

"They had barely mounted when Steve's window was violently thrown open and a torrent of unprintable abuse hurled at their devoted heads. The window slammed and Steve took the stairs at one jump, but by the time he reached the front door the gang, enveloped in a cloud of dust, was disappearing from view down the trail. Bob, being a stranger, naturally had to profess utter ignorance of the entire proceedings

and was regarded with some suspicion. But Steve, fearing ridicule, wisely ignored the incident."

"Yes," concluded Bob Simpson, "those were the days. I don't seem to have had any fun since we became civilized in this neck of the woods."

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SURVEY of the irrigation project had dis-I closed the fact that two thousand dollars would be the outside cost of the enterprise, which accord-It made a very fine ingly was to be undertaken. layout. A dam was to be constructed across Windigo Creek on Dick's old farm, about a quarter of a mile above the land to be irrigated. This would raise the water behind it about three feet, which, with the heavy natural fall in the creek, would enable them to commence irrigating the land almost at the north boundary of the section. Fully two hundred acres would be brought under irrigation and most of it was already broken. The dam would merely need to be the ordinary type of brush and earth dam, such as the industrious beavers construct to raise the level of Canadian creeks where they establish colonies. The balance of the work could be done by hired men with teams and scrapers. The actual cash outlay would probably not exceed fifteen hundred dollars.

Harvest was coming on now, and all other work would soon have to be set aside to garner the rapidly ripening grain. It was inspiring, something to stir the blood to look from the verandah, across the bed of the creek, over extensive, waving wheat-fields, the straw in many places waist-high and crowned with great, fat heads, and realize that it represented at least in some measure a man's handiwork. Seldom had such a view been beheld in the valley. It was, after all, a glorious privilege to be able to lay claim to a piece of mother earth and all the fullness thereof! How could there be any comparison between this God-given, task of producing the daily bread of mankind and being cooped up in a musty office or evil-smelling factory in a city? Such were Dick's thoughts as he cast a last

glance on this entrancing scene and leisurely went

indoors for the evening.

The household was sound asleep, when Dick was awakened by a peal of thunder, followed by several flashes of lightning and thunderclaps. A veritable hurricane was blowing and raindrops were beginning to splash noisily on the shingles of the roof. A storm was approaching. Presently the roar overhead increased in the shricking blasts of the gale as it fairly rocked the house on its foundation. Dick sprang out of bed and peered out of the window. Hail. Great God! Was this to be the finish of his beautiful crop and of all his dreams of plenty and prosperity? Dawn was coming and he quickly dressed, put on his "slicker" and went outside to face the elements. Rain, mixed with hailstones, was pelting down like a cascade. Muddy rivulets were running down the hills into the swollen creek, which roared in anger at the additional burden thrust upon it. He nervously examined the hailstones. Thank God, they were not very large. There was still a chance! He seated himself under the shelter of the verandah roof and silently watched the scene. a prev to racking anxiety.

By the time the worst of the storm had passed, it was almost broad daylight and Dick rushed frantically across the swaying little bridge that spanned the angry creek to ascertain the damage done. The first sight reassured him somewhat. A few of the top kernels in the riper heads had apparently been threshed out, but most of the grain seemed uninjured. He walked across and around the field, but the situation seemed to be about the same everywhere until he reached the lower corner, where the grain was lying flat on the ground cut into little bits by the fury of the elements. Evidently, the worst part of the storm had passed over this corner. Great, irregular hailstenes, the size of pigeon's eggs, mixed with wheat heads and bits of straw, covered the

ground everywhere. The havoc wrought here was complete and irretrievable!

By the time Dick returned to the house, the family

had assembled and breakfast was on the table.

"I am almost afraid to ask what the damage is,

Dick," said the Sage, hesitatingly.

"Thank God, it is not very serious. We will lose perhaps a couple of bushels per acre, but about twenty acres in the lower corner is destroyed absolutely. I am afraid," added Dick reflectively, "that some of our neighbours must be pretty badly hit. I do hope Billy Purdom escaped."

"Oh, Dick, it would be too cruel if he hasn't," cried Mary. "Better call him up on the phone at once and

find out."

Dick went to the phone and called Purdom, who had just returned from a survey of his own crop.

"Absolutely cleaned out, old man," replied Billy,

with shaking voice.

"What a damned shame!" ejaculated Dick. "Are

you not going to be able to save any of it at all?"

"I am afraid not, Dick. It is a black lookout for us all—it's what I depended on to keep the family going and carry on."

"Are you carrying any insurance?"

"Not a cent. I thought I would take a chance

this year," confessed Billy.

"I am coming right over to see you," replied Dick, after briefly telling him of his own narrow escape. He hung up the phone with a heavy heart, and proceeded to eat a hurried breakfast.

"Dad, we simply must help these people in some way. As you know, Billy has been the best of friends to me."

"I think I see how we might do that without husting his pride," replied the Sage, meditatively. "Why not offer Purdom the contract to construct our irrigation works?"

"The very thing," exclaimed Dick joyfully. "He will have no harvest work to do and, by hiring an extra hand, can earn almost as much as his crop would have netted him."

Dick got into his car and in a few moments was at the Purdom's front door. Billy looked stunned and Mrs. Purdom was listlessly busying herself with the children's breakfast, tears in her eyes. A pall hung

over the little shack.

"Good morning, everybody," cried Dick cheerfully. "Now buck up, Billy, you know there is often a silver lining to the darkest clouds. You are not going to have any harvest work to do, worse luck! How would you like to tackle the contract to build our irrigation system, dam and all?"

"Why, Dick, I'd certainly be glad to take that job;

but I have only one team."

"As it happens, old man, we have a spare work team which you are welcome to, if that would help you out

any."

"Dick, this is surely going to pull me out of a fearful hole. I will gladly takeson this contract and do a good, honest job for you, and I am grateful to you. I can't tell you how grateful I am."

"My dear fellow, there is no question of gratitude. It is a straight, cold-blooded proposition. I quite expect it will be our side that will owe gratitude to you

for the splendid job you will be doing for us."

"I will surely aim to do that," replied Billy, feelingly. The number of yards of earth to be moved had already been calculated by the engineer and the contract price per yard was a more or less standard sum for each season, so it did not take long to complete the preliminaries. It was arranged Billy should get a good scraper man and start work as soon as possible. Mrs. Purdom,

in silence and with averted face, grasped Dick's hand as he was leaving, her heart overflowing with gratitude.

On the way home, Dick reflected on his own narrow And there was ample food for deep and earnest reflection. The incident had emphasized the absolute necessity of proceeding with the greatest caution. He would buy the cattle if the bank were willing, but that must end all speculative investment. In the future, he would play safe and be satisfied with smaller returns. He would be adamant in regard to any further investment of any kind. He had been taught a lesson that

would remain with him for life.

On his return home a message had been received over the telephone to the effect that the bank had approved the proposed cattle loan, and Dick, accompanied by Wesley Purdom, started for the south at once to complete his purchase. The owners, the "Bar X", a small ranching concern, had been crowded pretty badly for range, during the past few years, owing to settlers taking up vacant land in the district. a forty-mile trip, which they expected to cover in the motor car before noon. Prior to leaving, Dick telephoned, so that the cattle might be gathered and corralled by the time they arrived. He was anxious to return the same day in order to hasten preparations for harvest. He meant to cut a little on the green side, so as to take as few chances as possible with the crop. On arrival they found everything ready for them.

The "Bar X" was the outfit with which Aleck Scott was employed. Aleck had finally succeeded in getting his discharge from the army, had reached Canada some months previously and had proceeded directly to the ranch where he had been received with open arms. Men were scarce during the war and although Aleck was still suffering mentally by reason of his war experience, he was perfectly able to perform a day's work, and the manager secretly congratulated himself upon obtaining the services of a man with experience upon whom he could thoroughly rely. Aleck was at once installed as foreman, and was, if anything, more efficient than he had been before. The army training had broadened him out considerably and had made him more companionable. There was no doubt that he fitted in completely with the "Bar X" organization.

Dick had received a line from him before he left England and had also been apprised of his arrival in Canada. He had written twice, asking him to come over for a short visit. He had been anxious to show him everything they had done and to receive his approval, which he felt certain would have been forthcoming. He and Aleck had become chums during the strenuous days of the war, and, while he could never completely break down the reserve of his somewhat taciturn companion, he felt certain that Aleck regarded him with feelings of friendly affection. He freely admitted to himself that he had been disappointed in Aleck's evident reluctance to pay them a visit, which he had scarcely taken the trouble to politely veil. However, upon arrival at the ranch headquarters, Aleck greeted Dick with unfeigned cordiality.

"Why in blazes haven't you been over to see us,

Aleck?" demanded Dick impatiently.

"Oh, I'll turn up some day," replied Aleck eva-

sively.

"I shall certainly see you do this time, my boy. If we make a deal for those cattle, I shall insist on your delivering them at our place."

"That would be kind of you, Dick, but to tell you the truth, I didn't think your people would be particularly interested in seeing a roughneck like me again."

"Just you wait and see. I shall leave it to you to make your peace with them without any assistance from me. They have asked after you dozens of times and

wondered why you never turned up. However, we had better get to work and go over those cows of yours."

The cattle were slowly milling around in the large corral, impatient to get back to their accustomed haunts. Wesley cast a critical eye over the bunch and nodded approval. They were a good-looking lot and showed a very high degree of breeding. In fact, this particular ranch had the reputation of having exercised good judgment in the selection of bulls for many years, and of having spared no expense in introducing the best blood that could be obtained locally into the breeding herd. With a few exceptions, the cattle were in the high condition that would be expected at that time of the year, in a season where the grass had been exceptionally good.

The job of "cutting out" commenced. Wesley at once discarded all animals in low condition, on the grounds that they were probably bad "doers" or suffered from some digestive defects. This was quickly accomplished, and the culls were driven through a gate into an adjoining corral. Then the expert work commencedthe rejection of cattle on bad conformation. Wesley showed considerable skill in spotting undesirable individuals. Some were too leggy, others were slack behind the shoulders, or lacking in heart girth. After a couple of hours of careful weeding out, the hundred and fifty head the contract called for remained, and Wesley announced that, while he would have liked to cull a few more, the final selection was a fine average lot, and the heifers, which had been more severely scrutinized than the steers, would make a splendid foundation for a breeding herd.

The owner of the ranch complimented Dick on the intelligent choice they had made, and asked him whether he would care to look over his bulls, which Dick was very keen to do. They were a fine, masculine lot and several of them took Wesley's fancy. The rancher confessed his anxiety to sell a few of them, as he had



been reducing his herd and would not need so many. He was willing to give Dick a good bargain, particularly as he happened to be a little short of feed. Wesley went over them one by one and stopped at a roan four-year-old, signalling Dick to come over and look at him.

"Here is the right sort, Dick. If you can buy him for three or four hundred dollars you will get a bargain, if I know anything about Shorthorns. Of course, I should like to look over his papers and see what sort of breeding is behind him. You are bound to buy a bull or two before next spring and this may be your best chance. From what I have seen of our heifers, this is the sort of bull you should have. Our she-stock is perhaps a bit leggy, taking them all around, and this fellow would correct that fault. He is my idea of a good bull, anyway."

The owner had approached by this time and looked

at them with an amused smile.

"You fellows seem to have an eye for the good ones all right. You are surely not going to rob me of my prize bull?" he asked.

"I am afraid not," replied Dick. "If he comes in that class, we will have to pass him up. We thought

he would mate well with the heifers out there."

"That he would and no mistake. He would mate well with almost any bunch. I paid five hundred dollars for him at the Calgary Bull Sale as a yearling."

"Well, that settles me. I am not quite ready yet

to buy that kind of stock," said Dick regretfully.

"What is he worth to you, Anstruther?"

"It isn't a question of what he is worth to me, but what I can afford to pay. The sort of a bull I buy would have to come within a couple of hundred dollars, I am afraid."

"You can't have him for that. But I have had a couple of season's use of him and I will have to buy

feed this winter. If you make it a cash transaction, I will sell him for three hundred."

"I know that is a bargain, but I really can't lay out the money just now, however much I would like

to own him."

"You are making a mistake, Anstruther. You are a young fellow just starting in the cattle business and if you take my advice you will start right. I know cows. I have bred them here for many years and I will just give you a piece of good advice and it won't cost you anything either: When you see a bull you want and have confidence in your judgment, don't stop at any reasonable price. The bull, you know, is half the herd:"

"I don't doubt you are entirely right, but I am working with very limited capital and must cut my cloth according to my measure. I would dearly love to have this bull heading my little herd, but the three hundred

is beyond me. I simply daren't do it."

"Well, you are going to pay me a tidy bit of money for those cattle yonder, and I don't mind telling you that I am glad to get rid of them just now. I am getting pretty badly crowded out here and had hard work to get hay enough for the stock I am retaining; so, I guess I can afford to give you a good deal on that bull. He is worth to-day what I paid for him as a yearling, but I'll just cut the price in two and let you have him for two hundred and fifty. Think it over." With this suggestion he left them.

"Say, Dick, jump at it," cried Wesley. "You will never do better than that and he is honestly giving you a bargain. This fellow would hold his own in mighty good company, I tell you. He would even be thought a pretty good one at the Guelph College farm where

thousand-dollar bulls are not uncommon."

"All right, Wes, I'll risk it. But you wanted to see his papers?" suggested Dick, hesitatingly.

"We will go up and cinch the bargain right now, Dick, before he gets time to back out. I'll bet his

breeding is O.K."

They went up to the house and Dick announced his intention to accept the offer, if the breeding of the bull was satisfactory. The registration certificate was produced and the herd books consulted for an extended pedigree of the animal.

"Great guns," exclaimed Wesley, "this fellow is bred in the purple." As the bargain had already been struck, he felt he could now afford to give vent to his

enthusiasm.

Before Dick returned it was arranged that Wesley would be given the loan of a pony and that Aleck Scott would help him bring the cattle home. It would take them two full days to make the trip. Dick issued his cheque for the amount of the purchase price and telephoned the bank that he would call the following morning and settle the advance by lien note. He was delighted with the whole transaction. He would now have a herd of cattle to be proud of, headed by one of the best bulls in the province. He felt that both had been well bought. The quality was there and it was unthinkable that that should not count in the end. He was impatient to show the family the latest additions to the farm stock. How full of interest this life was. There could be nothing else like it anywhere!

### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE FAMILY was waiting on the verandah for the breakfast bell when Dick approached from the creek bank. He deposited his fishing rod on the hooks under the verandah roof and proceeded to divest himself of his wet waders.

"Any luck this morning?" asked the Sage.

"Four good ones and half a dozen small ones," replied Dick. "Mary, I wish you would give those fish to Martha."

"Right-o. I vote we wait for breakfast and have them served this morning. I don't know anything more delicious than these brook trout straight from the cold water." Mary's plan was tacitly agreed to.

"I expect the cattle here during the afternoon and then, good people, I'll show you a sight that will warm the cockles of your hearts," announced Dick. "They camped last night at the big spring and they should easily be here by three o'clock."

Soon after the noon hour, a cloud of dust down the valley trail indicated the approach of the new herd and Dick started out on horseback to assist in getting the cattle through his gates. They were tired and footsore and moved slowly and unwillingly, pausing here and there to snatch a mouthful of grass. The bull was in the lead, bellowing crossly in protest against this continued enforced march.

As they drew near the outside gate, Dick rode on ahead and swung it wide open and then moved out of the way to the left, so as to assist in forcing the leaders through. The herd had nearly all entered the pasture when the tail end made a break and stampeded to the right. Wesley was in the rear, forcing the pace with loud shouts and Aleck Scott, who was assisting him,

made a quick dash across the prairie to head off the

fleeing cattle.

Suddenly, his horse appeared to stumble and before it could recover itself, fell. Aleck was shot over its head and landed on the ground with a dull thud. Dick and Wesley galloped over to the scene of the accident as fast as their horses could carry them. Aleck was lying on his face, stunned. The pony had scrambled to its feet and stood trembling, with the off foreleg saised from the ground. They quickly turned Aleck over in his back and a faint groan indicated that conscibusness was returning and with it apparently excruciating pain.

Dick remounted his pony and quickly made his way to the house, informed his sister that an accident had happened, jumped into the car and returned for the injured man, who, by this time, was fully conscious. A quick examination revealed a broken ankle. Aleck was carefully lifted into the back seat, brought to the house and the village doctor telephoned for. He was fortunately at home and promised to be there within an hour, and gave directions as to what should be done to

relieve the pain pending his arrival.

Wesley had by this time removed the saddle from the injured pony and had coaxed it up to the buildings. It had twisted a pastern severely, stepping into a treacherous badger hole. Dick phoned to the "Bar X" and apprised Aleck's employer of the accident, and informed him that the injured man was being attended to and would be taken care of at the "castle" until he could be moved.

The doctor arrived and promptly and skilfully set the broken ankle. He stayed for supper and enjoyed thoroughly his arguments with the Sage. After the meal was finished, they all strolled out to the pasture to look over the new purchase. Aleck's accident had, of course, robbed the occasion of most of the glamour The doctor, like many country practitioners in the West, had a very fair eye for live-stock and was full of praise for the herd, which he had known for years. The big, massive youngsters took the fancy of both Mary and the Sage. They instinctively knew the cattle were good without being able to appreciate the fine points in conformation. The doctor recognized the bull as soon as he saw him in the corral, and complimented Dick highly on his purchase.

Aleck was soon able to hobble around on crutches and seemed very anxious to return to the ranch, but Mrs. Anstruther absolutely vetoed such a move until the plaster cast was removed. He was an uncommonly attractive fellow, was Aleck. Tall and wiry, with the

slim build and rolling gait of the cowpuncher.

The Sage concluded that he was evidently a man of superior education in spite of his somewhat humble occupation. All attempts to draw him out, however, failed. His name was Alexander Scott; he could read and write—and that was all. His manner of speech when with the ladies unmistakably betrayed the fact that he had been brought up amidst refined surroundings. When with the boys he was apt to assume the rough and ready attitude, which, however, did not mislead Dick.

Mary and Aleck had naturally seen a good deal of each other and had become rather good chums, as young people on a prairie farm, who entertain no rooted antipathy for each other, are apt to. The evening before Aleck's departure, they were strolling along the creek bank, he still on his crutches, she carrying a basket into which she had gathered Saskatoon berries.

"Well," he observed regretfully, "all good things come to an end. I don't know how I can ever repay you people for all your trouble and kindness towards a stray don like myself."

stray dog like myself."

3

"Just don't try," replied Mary, stopping to strip

another Saskatoon berry bush. "We did absolutely no

more for you than common decency demanded."

"It is kind of you to put it that way, but it doesn't lessen my obligation. I suppose the best way to reciprocate is to take myself off and cease to bother you any further."

"Why do you say that?" demanded Mary, wonder-

ingly.

"Oh, I suppose I am a little down in the mouth.

Besides, it is the strict truth."

"We don't seem to think so," contended Mary. "We are all sorry to have you leave us. Do sit down a moment, you must be tired. I am afraid I wander on utterly oblivious of your difficulty in following me."

They seated themselves on the creek bank and silently watched the clear water noisily rushing over the gravel and boulders. The evening was calm and cool and the sun was setting behind the hills. Mary was wearing a very becoming light summer dress. The Anstruther family had never quite given up the habit of changing for the evening meal.

"I do love the quiet, peaceful evenings in this country," said Mary. "There is something soothing and

kindly about these long twilights."

"I love this particular evening," replied Aleck. "I am afraid I love it more than I dare tell you." Mary remained tense and silent.

"Now I have offended you," he continued, sadly.

"No, if you mean that you find my society congenial, I would scarcely say that you offend me, on the contrary, I feel distinctly complimented," Mary contended, smiling.

"And yet it is an offense," he replied bitterly. "Oh, God, I wish I had never seen you," he added impetuously. "I love you and I despise myself for telling

you."

Mary, it is to be feared, had never thought it worth



while to analyze her feelings towards Aleck. She had grown to like him and had enjoyed their little walks together. She realized, vaguely, that his departure would leave a void in her daily life. The intimacy that had imperceptibly arisen between them had, however, never struck her as a serious matter. His declaration of love had, therefore, come upon her as a complete surprise.

"I see no reason why you should despise yourself, Mr. Scott," she replied gently. "I think we'll just agree to forget about this."

"I wish I could, but I never will." After a pause he added: "I realize it is an impertinence on my part to have spoken as I did, but tell me you will forgive me."

"I freely forgive anything that requires forgiveness. I am not a bit offended. It would be sheer hypocrisy to pretend I am," she replied. "Let us go back to the house. It is time you went to bed and rested up for your long trip to-morrow."

"It is kind of you to say that, Miss Anstruther. We may never meet again after to-morrow, and you

will try to think kindly of me. Won't you?"

"Of course I will. But we are not going to say good-bye. There are not so many pleasant friends out here that I want to lose them almost before I find them," Mary replied gaily. "As soon as you completely recover we shall certainly expect you to come over again."

Aleck was in a mental turmoil when he reached his bedroom. He sat down in his chair heavily, and slumped forward, a picture of utter dejection. Again he had made a fool of himself. What right had he, the wastrel and gambler, to utter words of love to this woman? He, the black sheep of the family, whose departure from England had been regarded with relief by all his relatives. He, who had wasted his fortune and besmirched his name! Great God, what a trick fate had played upon

him to bring this girl into his useless life, when time to

retrieve was long past and gone.

True. he had run straight in Canada and had worked hard. But his chance was gone. He could save a bit: perhaps marry some hard-working countrywoman, and eventually become his own man. Such a future could not be offered Mary Anstruther. She had refused to take offence at his unwarranted declaration of love, and had been sweet and sympathetic as became a thorough-Was she just sorry for him? Or, could it be possible, that she entertained the merest spark of interest in him? At times he almost thought she might. He rehearsed their conversation word for word. whole episode was branded indelibly upon his mind. No; he would go back to the ranch and settle down to his daily work and completely obliterate the whole mad incident from his memory. Work, and yet more work, would surely prove an effective antidote in time.

Mary also spent a restless night. She admitted to herself that the matter could not be taken seriously. Aleck was an ordinary hired man. But she found it difficult to reconcile the man's personality with his station in life. She rather suspected that he was a gentleman born and bred. Her vanity was also flattered a little. He had been terribly in earnest, and had laboured under intense mental stress. It was no use denying that he had proven a most agreeable companion. She might as well confess that her interest in him was more than casual. He was so thoroughly congenial and likeable. She finally went to sleep and became oblivious to the new interest that had been projected into her life with such startling suddenness.

Early the following morning Dick drove Aleck back to the ranch. The family, one and all—Mary a little self-conscious—parted with him with genuine regret and many warm invitations to look them up once in a while. Aleck had expressed to Mr. and Mrs. Anstruther

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his deep gratitude for all they had done for him, as well as the hope that some day he might be able to reciprocate. Mrs. Anstruther was quite moved by the evident sincerity of his words.

### CHAPTER FIFTERN

HE IRRIGATION WORK was nearing completion. Billy had employed three men and teams to rush it through before the frost set in and stopped the undertaking. In a day or two they would be able to turn in the water. The head gates would be ready by that time. Billy had built them according to the plan, which had been interpreted by the Sage, who had been the life and soul of the enterprise, and had devoted so much study to the whole subject of irrigation, and the crops that lent themselves profitably to culture under artificial watering, that he was gradually being deferred to as an authority on the question.

After some vexatious delays the water had, at last, been turned into the ditches, and a man, skilled in irrigation, had been hired in Calgary to lay out the distribution system and to roughly level the land, as well as to fall irrigate the two hundred acres that could be covered. It was found to be a bigger job than had been anticipated, but it was finally accomplished in some sort of way and by concentrating the work largely upon the most level part of the field, they contrived to get fifty acres in very fair shape for seeding down to

alfalfa the following spring.

"I really feel that we have achieved something worth while, Dick, in getting this system constructed," ob-

served the Sage.

"No question about that, governor. This has been a fine season and we have fared well, but dry years will come as sure as anything and then we will have our feed assured. You have absolutely fired me with enthusiasm, and I have a feeling of security now which makes life seem much more pleasant than it was before."

"Yes, I realize that running live-stock imposes the obligation of providing feed with unfailing certainty,

and that, of course, makes irrigation a valuable servant. It really seems almost absurd to me that this little life-giving stream of ours has hitherto been running to waste," said the Sage reflectively.

"Well, Dad, you certainly found your vocation out here. If it hadn't been for you, I expect this water

would still be going to waste," replied Dick.

"I am told that once alfalfa is properly established, you can cut three to four tons per acre each year, and also that alfalfa hay is approximately equal to bran in feeding value. So I should think your wisest plan would be to seed practically all your irrigated land down to alfalfa as fast as you can get it prepared. That would give you from six to eight hundred tons yearly."

"With any luck we shall need all of that to winter the stock within a few years. But all this costs money, Dad. Alfalfa' seed is worth seventy-five cents a pound and we will need at least twelve pounds per acre, or eighteen hundred dollars for the whole area," contended

Dick.

"I know your figures are correct, old man, because I have taken the trouble to look the matter up. But let us, as a matter of curiosity, complete our calculation and see where this irrigation development lands us," replied the Sage. "The land cost us originally about ten dollars per acre, not counting the value of the improvements on the whole place. The construction cost, let us say, an equal amount. The surface work will run to about five dollars and alfalfa seed and seeding to about twelve dollars. That gives you a total capital outlay of thirty-seven dollars per acre. Is that about correct, Dick?" demanded the Sage.

"Approximately so, I should say."

"Very well then. I find that alfalfa land under irrigation sells in the Western States all the way from one to three hundred dollars per acre, according to location. If our land will produce four tons per acre, which should



be worth ten dollars per ton, we almost get our capital back each year, with no more expense than is involved in applying the water and cutting and stacking the hay. Where can you get a better investment, my boy?"

"If you go a step further and have the right sort of live-stock to feed this hay to, I am jolly well certain that no better investment could be found anywhere," added Dick with conviction. "But that's not the point. A friend of mine once said that he was so infernally hard pushed for capital, that if all the ocean liners in the world were for sale at a shilling apiece, he couldn't afford to buy even a cable tow. That is just about the position we are drifting into. I am beginning to see that one expense leads to another and a stop must be called somewhere, no matter how promising these new enterprises may look. And if we don't know when and where to stop, someone else may step in and tell us in no uncertain terms. God knows I want to make

The Sage clapped Dick on the shoulder, sympathetically. "Never mind, old man. Don't get down in the mouth. You know we have not shot our last bolt yet."

progress as fast and furiously as possible, but I sometimes get a bit apprehensive when I think of our obligations here and the expenses we are now committed

"I am not worrying, Dad; but it does seem to me that we have pretty nearly shot our last bolt, unless you refer to the balance of your little capital. And I may as well tell you now," added Dick, with a glint of determination in his eyes, "that that can only come into this enterprise over my dead body. I simply should never know a moment's peace of mind."

The Sage had certainly proven a good sport, Dick reflected. A wholly unsuspected side of his character had come to light. His enthusiasm had been decidedly helpful and encouraging. But he was developing an

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attitude towards financial risks that had to be curbed. His previous lack of business experience would, of course, amply account for this tendency. Dick felt he must himself develop resisting power and play the role of "wet blanket", which, worse luck, was temperamentally distasteful to him.

### CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ERALD CUST was lying in one of the Base Hos-T pitals, swathed in bandages. His unit had been through a heavy engagement and had suffered frightfully. Gerald, leading his men into the enemy's trenches, through a veritable inferno of shrapnel and machine-gun fire, had fallen, torn and lacerated by a bursting shell. First aid had been administered at the dressing station and he had been rushed to the rear for further treatment. His condition had from the first been regarded as extremely serious, though not entirely hopeless. He had lingered between life and death for several days with only brief occasional returns to consciousness. His people had been notified of his desperate condition and Lady Rokeby had, through influence, obtained leave for Edith, who was attached to a nearby hospital unit, to visit him and do what she could for him.

Edith had always liked Gerald Cust and lost no time in making preparation to hasten to his side. The news had been a shock to her, but she had long ago become inured to the daily chapter of calamities and the bulky casualty lists of those terrible days when the fate of the Allies hung in the balance. It seemed as if human life had completely lost its value and that the mind of man and woman had, through over-saturation, become almost callous to suffering and death. Edith packed a few necessary toilet articles and was fortunate enough to get a lift to her destination, where she arrived during the afternoon of a drizzling, chilly autumn day. She looked up the medical officer in command, who introduced her to the matron, which resulted in a cup of warm tea and an assignment of temporary quarters.

Edith had been sitting by the bedside for some time before Gerald opened his eyes. He was under the influence of a narcotic which was being freely administered to soothe the racking pains. He looked at her intently for a moment, then closed his eyes, while, with smiling face, his mind again floated away into space. Edith examined his chart. She had become experienced in interpreting the temperature graph and pulse record in such cases. Evidently Gerald was a very, very sick man. The nurse advised her to go and lie down so as not to wear herself out unnecessarily. Towards morning the fever would abate and he was more likely to have lucid intervals. She would call Edith if there should be a change at any time.

Edith was up at daylight the following morning and after a light breakfast resumed her watch at Gerald's side. The fever was evidently subsiding, his breathing seemed more normal and the nurse was hopeful that he might presently return from the land of dreams and recognize his visitor. Edith was beginning to feel the tension of suspense and was almost on the verge of

weeping when Gerald moved slightly.

"Nurse, . . drink . . .," he said feebly. Edith held the glass to his lips and gently raised his head. He took a mouthful of water and again became oblivious to his surroundings. Edith by this time could contain herself no longer, but gave vent to her emotions freely. Here was a man with whom she had been on terms of intimacy. He had asked her to marry him and they had been dinner and dancing partners time and again. And now he was lying here mutilated and battling with grim death

"Edith . . . is this a dream?" whispered the sick man.

"No, dear Captain Cust; you are not dreaming. I came over to see you yesterday. How are you feeling?"

Gerald, with a superhuman effort, endeavoured to pull himself together. He must keep awake now. She had told him it was no dresh. She was there

the one human being on earth he most longed for-

watching by his bedside!

"I have no pain . . . a drink, please." Edith put another piece of ice in the glass and held it while he took a long, refreshing draught. He opened his eyes wide and looked at her hungrily.

"God bless you for coming," he said slowly. wiped away a tear and gently pressed his hand. was suddenly filled with joy at the thought of being there and contributing to the happiness of one who was not alone a good friend, but who had also played a worthy part fighting for the old flag.

"I am on leave of absence for a few days and am going to see as much of you as I can. But you are not to overtire yourself or the matron will send me away."

"Just sit where you are and . . . let me look at you."

"I won't leave you," replied Edith gently.

Edith's arrival had unconsciously proven a sufficiently strong incentive to cause the sick man to regain control of his mental faculties for the time being. overworked nurse, making a fleeting visit to ascertain the condition of her charge, smiled knowingly. She, naturally, had drawn her own conclusions as to the relations between patient and visitor, and the spectacular revival of Captain Cust, therefore, was not wholly unexpected by her. Of course, the poor fellow was doomed; it was only a flash in the pan. As she left to complete her round, she cast a compassionate glance at Edith.

During the remainder of the morning Gerald was restless, but his excursions into dreamland were of shorter duration. Edith held his hand, which, during his periods of consciousness, he gripped with pathetic Her arm ached cruelly in its cramped position, but she could not bear to withdraw the hand to which he clung so tenaciously. The nurse finally

sent Edith away for her lunch and a much needed rest. When she resumed her vigil later in the afternoon, the fever was increasing in intensity and Gerald's exhausted mind gradually slippped away from its moorings.

When Edith arrived at the bedside the following morning, Gerald was awake and had taken some nourishment. He greeted her with a smile. His wounds had been dressed and the doctor had been surprised to find his mind absolutely clear. This was the first occasion since his admittance that he had been able to converse Gerald asked him point blank whether there was the least chance of his recovery and the doctor had felt it his duty to hold out no hope whatever. he had any business affairs to attend to he had advised him strongly to lose no time in doing so. evidently had expected no other verdict and was not visibly affected by the fate that awaited him. He had a faint recollection that the padre had already intimated as much to him. Worn down with suffering and fever, his vitality was at a low ebb. Nature had mercifully prepared his roving mind for the great adventure. Besides, death had been his companion and side-partner in the trenches for so long that familiarity had robbed the grim reaper of his power to inspire terror.

"Miss Fane, will you gratify the whim of a dying

man?" pleaded Gerald.

"I will do anything in the world I possibly can. But you must not permit yourself to become gloomy and morbid," replied Edith reprovingly.

"There is not a chance of my surviving this . . . and if I did, I should be a hopeless invalid. . . . No, it is better to 'go West'."

"What is it you want me to do?" asked Edith gently.

"I want you to marry me now. . . It will only be for a brief time, so don't be afraid," added the sick man. "You once said you were dependent on others. I have

only a trifle to leave, but it would please me to think I had helped you a little."

Edith cast a startled glance at Gerald who had

momentarily closed his eyes, plainly exhausted.

"I could not marry you anticipating God to take you away, dear Captain Cust, you must see that," pleaded Edith.

"He is going to . . . no matter . . ."

"I find it dreadfully hard to refuse you anything. But I am completely flustered and I feel I must think it over calmly," replied Eidth hesitatingly. "I am going to leave you now."

"Yes . . . think it over. But . . . be quick. Don't be away too long . . . I love to feel you are here,

close. . . .

Edith left him with a heavy heart. She saw clearly that she could never bring herself to marry him unless she could sincerely pray for his speedy recovery. It would be inhuman to act otherwise. And Dick? She seemed incapable of analysing her feelings toward him. She was not conscious of actually loving him. She ate her lunch mechanically and went to her quarters to lie

down. But sleep would not come.

She turned the perplexing question over in her mind and became more and more confused. How could she refuse the request of a dying man? It was evident that his sole concern was her welfare, coupled perhaps with a pitiful elament of personal gratification. And yet, if he lived, could she love him as a husband? Otherwise, how could she marry him? She must be clear on that point. There he was, wounded, suffering, probably dying, and she could sweeten his last hours, if indeed it were God's will that he should be taken. Under the spell of war-time emotionalism, which so often precipitated the most placid individuals into heroic acts of self-sacrifice, all doubt vanished from her mind.

She would marry Gerald Cust and she would humble

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herself before her Maker and pray that he might be spared and if her supplication were answered, she would devote herself to making his life as happy as his helpless physical condition would permit of. Her decision was formed and she would not torture her mind further with doubts. She resolutely made her way to Gerald's ward. He was resting quietly and greeted her with a brave smile.

"I have thought it all over, Gerald dear, and I will marry you if you want me to," she said unsteadily.

"God bless you. . . . I hoped you would."

"And I shall hope and pray that your fears may not be realized and that you may be spared for many years

yet," added Edith fervently.

"God bless you again, dear . . . you can't realize how easy it makes it all to feel that somebody cares . . ." Gerald grasped her hand while she bent over the cot and kissed him on the forehead. He closed his eyes for a moment and then whispered: "Ask the padre to come to me."

They were married the following morning. Gerald seemed to have improved marvellously in spirits and could not bear to have his bride leave his side all day long. Everyone in the hospital felt deeply sorry for both of them. That death would soon part them seemed to be a foregone conclusion.

Edith realized that she had a heavy task to perform. Dick must be told. Before she retired, she wrote him a lengthy letter and frankly related everything that had

occurred.

career, Dick dear, and you must write me often. Poor Gerald suffers frightfully at times and the doctors hold out no hope whatever of his recovery. It is dreadful to see him lying there, his body shattered and his mind wandering most of the time. But I shall not give up hope. And, I am afraid, he really does not want to

live, realizing that it would be to him, at least, a living death. . . . There seems to be nothing but sorrow and misery in the world for all of us just now. Write me at once and tell me that I did the right thing under the circumstances. It will cheer me and, God knows, I need it just now . . . and you must promise me that you will always write me as you have done in the past. Your letters have been a great comfort to me over here. \* . ."

Aunt Selina was duly apprised of Edith's decision. She thought it somewhat unconventional, but one could not account for all the distressing things that were happening in this topsy-turvy world nowadays. She wired her complete approval, which, however, arrived some hours after the ceremony, and wrote a formidable letter to Edith and Gerald wishing them a long and happy lifestogether. The dear old lady had at last obtained her heart's desire!

### CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE THRESHING had been completed on the Anstruther farm and the grain had been safely delivered at the Clearwater elevator. highly elated with the result. The wheat had actually made forty-one bushels per acre, in spite of the slight hail damage—and the price was on the upward move. Dick had 6,700 bushels to sell and a few cents per bushel, one way or the other, was a matter of considerable importance. The probable fluctuation of the market was, therefore, a popular topic of conversation in the family circle, during the lengthening autumn evenings. The weather was now too chilly to sit on the verandah at night, and a cheerful log fire drew all and sundry indoors like a magnet. Even the Sage forsook his comfortable den and joined the family conclave before the fireplace.

"I am getting a daily report on the grain market from your elevator firm, Dick, and I am also receiving the monthly market reports issued by the United States government. I find the grain market situation a most fascinating subject of study. There are so many sides to it that I become quite bewildered at times. I am just now trying to reconcile the fluctuations of the market with the statistical position of wheat and, I must confess I find it extremely difficult. The speculative element seems to be the disturbing factor in the

case."

"Yes, I know," replied Dick with disgust. "We farmers are at the mercy of the speculator. We have to take what is offered and they skim off the cream. We discussed that question at the last meeting of our U.F.A. Local in Clearwater. There will be some strong resolutions touching this matter before the next annual convention, unless I am very much mistaken. We are

all just about fed up with the present system of marketing our grain."

"Yes, I suppose you chaps will revolutionize the trading system of the world one of these fine days,"

replied the Sage, smiling broadly.

"I don't know about that, Dad, but we do propose to stop this unmoral speculation in our grain. The farmer is entitled to all his wheat is worth and I can't see why those wolves should be permitted to take the hide off us," contended Dick.

"But, my dear boy, you must be aware that speculation in commodities such as wheat performs a very

useful function in marketing."

"That may be perfectly true, Dad; but we all feel that these fluctuations in the wheat market are all the result of manipulation and work an injury to the farmer."

"I am not prepared to admit that. Speculation is at the very foundation of the farmer's business. He himself is the world's greatest speculator, it seems to me. Your gamble starts when you put your seed in the ground without the least idea whether you are going to have any return whatever."

"Of course; but we object to further gambling when we finally are fortunate enough to harvest a crop," contended Dick, now warming up to the argument.

"Each day's fluctuations is the result of speculative buying and selling in the open market. At this moment, you are undecided as to whether or not you should hold your wheat for a possible rise in the market. It is all stored in the elevator at Clearwater and you have a warehouse receipt. Isn't that the situation?" demanded the Sage.

"Exactly," replied Dick, wondering what his father

"Well then, my boy, it seems to me you are one of those terrible speculators yourself and you are, through your action in holding for higher prices, endeavouring to exercise, in a remote degree, of course, a bullish influence on the market. I can come to no other conclusion. The story is exactly the same with the professional dealer. Neither of you is under any compulsion whatever to sell until the market suits you."

"I am afraid, governor, I stand convicted and that I don't know the subject well enough to argue it out with you," responded Dick. "But all that gets me nowhere in particular with respect to that all-important question of whether we should hold or sell just now."

"Broadly speaking," replied the Sage, judicially, "the statistical position of wheat is exceedingly strong. I can see how prices might easily go up, perhaps even spectacularly. I utterly fail to see how they can go down to any extent. Of course, the purchasing power of Europe is a factor, but experience shows that civilized countries always seem able to find the money for actual necessities of life, however poverty-stricken they may be."

"That means that you would advise holding our

wheat, governor?"

"That means nothing of the sort. I am giving you information upon which you can formulate your own decision. I am not giving advice. We are in precisely the same position as your much-maligned speculator, who cannot make up his mind whether to buy or to sell. You probably realize by now, that on your decision, and on his decision and on those of thousands of others in the same predicament, depends the daily purchases and sales and, consequently, the daily and hourly prices of wheat."

"Please don't rub it in further, Dad. I take it all back. At our next U.F.A. meeting, I shall move a vote of thanks to your friend the speculator, if you like. But, seriously," he added, "the decision is one of great

moment and I would like your opinion."

"You already have it, Dick. If you can afford to

hold, I would certainly delay selling. I will watch the

market carefully and keep you posted."

"Good for you, governor. In the meanwhile I am going to tell our U.F.A. crowd what you say. Some of those fellows may decide to follow suit. I hate to see them sacrifice their property at present prices."

"Just as you like, my boy, but take an older man's tip and don't give advice in a matter of that sort. It

seldom pays."

Mary had had a very busy day preparing her poultry houses for the approaching cold weather and getting the sexes separated. It was high time to fatten the cockerels and get them off the farm. She had raised hundreds of them and had been the busiest person around the place. The proposal to apply all the egg and chicken money on the grocery account had been flatly rejected as soon as it became apparent that Mary was in the business seriously.

All the money she earned she deposited to her personal account in the bank and she paid by cheque the market price to Dick for the feed she used from time to time. But Mary was tired and yawned luxuriously. She kissed her mother and father good-night and retired. The Sage went to his den to have a final pipe and to run over some new literature he had received that

morning.

The following evening, Mrs. Anstruther was busily engaged with her knitting and Dick was wrapt in a brown study, staring vacantly at the glowing embers in the fire-place. His thoughts were far away.

"How are things between Edith and yourself," ven-

tured his mother.

"Not very satisfactory, dear. Edith is apparently not cut out for a farmer's wife. At least, she doesn't think she is," replied Dick, moodily.

"You are not engaged then?"

"No, there is not even an understanding between

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us. She is a very strong-minded girl, mater, and has decided ideas of her own. She doesn't seem to take kindly to life out here."

"Well, Dick, I wouldn't worry too much about that. Everything will come right in the end. You see if they

don't," replied Mrs. Anstruther soothingly.

"Darling mother, Edith means all the world to me, and I am positive I could make her happy out here. I sometimes think that if it were not for Lady Rokeby, she would take her chances with me, but her aunt has set her heart on Edith making a brilliant match in England."

"Never mind, my boy. I cannot help thinking that Edith is the sort of a girl who will ultimately arrange her own matrimonial affairs. I admire her spunk and character and would dearly love to see you two married. I know more about girls and their ways than you do, Dick, and I can't help thinking that everything will come out all right in the end."

"I sincerely hope so, dear. I would give almost anything to believe you. The present state of uncer-

tainty is most trying," replied Dick moodily.

Mrs. Anstruther's encouraging words made an impression on Dick. He and his mother were the best of pals, but Dick could not easily discuss his affairs of the heart with anyone. It pleased him, however, to realize that his mother shared his anxiety and desires in the matter. Things on the farm were prospering beyond all expectation. He felt the time would soon come when he could offer Edith a place at his side, that he would not need to apologize for. If everything turned out well, he would be able to give her all necessary comforts and he felt convinced she would soon adapt herself to life in the West. He would be of good cheer and would work uncomplainingly towards that end.

#### CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Chicken season and Dick was on deck at an unusually early hour, prepared for a day's shooting. He had spotted several coveys in the upper field and meant to have his sport before the arrival of the annual shooting parties from the city. Dick had spent his spare hours lately training a young well-bred pointer a Clearwater friend had presented him with. He looked

eagerly forward to trying him out under his gun:

He had an early and hurried breakfast, put on his shooting togs and released his dog. It was a bright, frosty morning and Dick lost no time in getting out on the stubble. The dog made its first unmistakable point about a quarter of a mile from the buildings. He lifted his forepaw, raised his head, tail extended, and stood frozen—a picture to gladden the eye of the sportsman. Dick advanced cautiously and the dog flushed a large covey of chickens. A right and a left, while they whirred past, rewarded him with two birds. The dog was steady as a rock. The covey alighted near a poplar grove on the creek bank and he again approached and got his third bird. This was the sport of kings!

Dick made his way towards the hills and quickly bagged a Hungarian partridge. And a second one. He was in luck. His injured foot was beginning to feel the strain of the long walk over rough country and as the noon hour was approaching, he decided to cross the creek and make for the buildings. Within half an hour he had picked up another covey and two more birds fell to his gun. He was thoroughly satisfied with his morning's sport and enthusiastic over the behaviour of his dog when he joined the family and related the

morning's adventure.

During the afternoon a solitary horseman entered

the outer gate and made his way towards the house. He sat his horse in the indolent fashion of the cowman on a long ride, one hand resting on the horn of the saddle, body slouching now to one side and then to the other, easing himself by shifting his weight. As he reached the buildings, Mrs. Anstruther came to the front door. He dismounted with agility, threw the reins over his left arm, removed his sombrero and meeting her half way to the verandah steps grasped her outstretched hand in a warm greeting.

"You see, Mrs. Anstruther, I turn up like the proverbial bad penny. I am on my way to the 'Lazy H' to look over some heifers and thought you might, in the kindness of your heart, put me up over night. I find forty miles in the saddle pretty trying yet on my ankle."

"Most assuredly, Aleck. We will be delighted to have you. Are you quite strong again?" asked Mrs. Anstruther.

"Oh, I am pretty well all right now, but I still feel the effects of my accident at times."-

"Come inside and rest. We are going to have tea as soon as my daughter gets back from the poultry house. She will be glad to see you, Aleck. We often talk about you and your nasty spill."

"You were all so kind to me on that occasion, Mrs. Anstruther, that I was half hoping when I came through the gate I might have another," replied Aleck jocularly.

Mary entered with a basket full of eggs and, if the strict truth were recorded, she almost dropped them on the floor in sheer astonishment when she identified the unexpected visitor. Aleck jumped to his feet and nicely covered her confusion by a painfully conventional greeting, which was responded to in an equally conventional manner. The Sage emerged from the library and extended a hearty welcome to Aleck, who by this time had fully recovered his wits. Dick was busy with the cattle,

but joined them by the time tea was served. He, too, was genuinely glad to see their late patient.

The conversation veered around to the inevitable topic of the beef market. Prices were soaring to record heights. The cattlemen were having their inning with a vengeance. How long would this prosperous situation continue? The wish being father to the thought, most of the ranchers were fully persuaded that it would last for years.

"I find it very difficult to come to a conclusion," observed the Sage. "We really don't know to what extent Europe's herds have actually been depleted during this war. And then, there is another factor that bears on the case, and one I don't think we feel disposed to take seriously enough. I mean the propaganda to curtail meat consumption, which has been vigorously promoted all over the world almost since the war broke out, and has weaned millions of people from their accustomed fare. There is also the economic situation which forces the populations of Europe to buy the cheapest food, which undoubtedly is vegetables and grains. I would not care to risk too much on the continued high price of beef, although I do think that the situation is safe enough for a year or two."

"T sgree with you, Sir," said Aleck deliberately. "Present prices seem crazy to me. Most of the cattlemen are borrowing right up to the hilt and, if I am not mistaken, there will be a day of reckoning some time."

"That is reasonably certain," replied Dick, "the only question is when that time will come. That is where

the gamble comes in."

"We should realize that present prices are boom prices. When the break comes, as come it must, it will not be a gradual process, giving everybody time to get comfortably out with small loss. At the first appearance of a serious decline, the cattlemen will get cold feet and

rush everything on the market, which will break badly almost instantly. That is the way I size it up."

"I am afraid you are a pessimist, Aleck," contended

Dick, smilingly.

"I am nothing of the kind, but I should not feel secure with a large investment of borrowed money in cattle just now, which is the plight of most of our cattle-

men to-day."

Dick did not feel very happy in his mind over this conversation. It was, to say the least, disturbing. He had no right to run any risks whatever with funds borrowed from the bank. Was it not better, and more conducive to peace of mind, to proceed with caution? The family were quite comfortable and happy and he could apparently afford to eliminate risks. Small future earnings would not interfere to any extent with their present mode of living, which seemed to satisfy them all.

But was a comfortable living the sum of all his ambitions? No! A thousand times, no! He must make his pile. If he failed, his life would have to be devoted to taking care of the family as long as they needed it. That responsibility could not be exaded and would not be shirked. But he must have his chance to create a place for himself. Dick decided he would not sell the cattle until he could get the full measure of profit, unless there should be unmistakable signs of a break in the market.

Aleck, after supper, accompanied Mary to her domain to "put the chickens to bed", as he humourously observed. They discussed the weather, the war, in fact, every conceivable topic of conversation under the sun. Mary was unaccountably cheerful. Really, it was difficult to see what particular occasion there was for this exuberance of spirits. Nothing special had apparently happened that day to justify the ridiculous urge to rejoice that she was dimly conscious of. It was

a very pleasant mood, however, and Mary, like a sensible girl, gave free rein to it without asking herself any disturbing questions. Aleck left the following morning, buoyant and in the best of humour, with strict injunctions to stay over again on his return trip, which, needless to say, he faithfully promised to do.

After the noon-day meal the following day, Mary started for the village to deliver her eggs and to discharge a few commissions for the family. She called for the mail and noted with satisfaction that there was a bulky letter for Dick. Poor old Dick, she thought, his little romance was not apparently progressing any too. smoothly. He was a trifle secretive about his love affair, a fact which Mary somewhat resented. Now, if she were in a similar position she would not hesitate to take Dick completely into her confidence. Still, Aleck had actually almost proposed to her and she had not felt any particular desire to tell Dick anything about it. But that was a trifle different. Aleck had himself admitted that it was. And yet, when she came to think of it, the cases were not so entirely different after all. Aleck, of course, was a dear boy and she really liked him tremendously. But almost anyone would admit that it was out of the question to take the matter seriously. She could not possibly marry a man without any prospects whatever, however fond she might be of him. One must be sensible about such a very serious matter as matrimony, but Mary just about concluded that all these material obstacles in the way of the course of true love was a very great nuisance indeed. It would be much simpler if we could give free reins to our affections without counting the cost. What had such sordid matters as social standing and material resources to do with divine love? Of pourse, she was thinking of Dick and Edith. Not a doubt about it.

Mary opened the throttle and the flivver bravely responded, so that she was soon in sight of the buildings.

last bitter word.

Aleck might have said something exciting, she reflected. He had been so painfully matter-of-fact. Well, it was all over anyway, so why worry about that? She surely was not a flirt who enjoyed having men whisper protestations of undying affection? Certainly not. Aleck knew his place and it was greatly to his credit that he had not taken advantage of their intercourse the previous day. He certainly had all the instincts of the gentleman: there was no doubt about that.

Mary parked the car and brought her parcels into the sitting room. Dick, who had been working in the corral, followed her, looked over the mail and picked out his letters. The one from Edith he put in his pocket and shortly afterwards went upstairs to read it in his own room. He had not heard from her for an unusually long time. He opened it eagerly and after reading the first couple of paragraphs, leaned back in his chair and covered his face with his hands. He sat immovable for several minutes unable to grasp the full significance of the calamity that had befallen him. Dazed, he again started reading the fatal message and persisted to the

This was the end of everything—all his hopes nds aspirations ruthlessly dashed to the ground. What was the use of striving any further to carve out a future for himself? Success now would be a hollow mockery. With Edith out of his life, nothing worth while remained. As well take the easy way and follow the lines of least resistance. Dick was crushed. He remained in his room; he could not possibly face his family. Explanations were repugnant to him. No one would understand.

He sat for an hour brooding over the foul injustice of it all. There was a timid knock on his door.

"Are you unwell, dear?" asked his mother.

"No, Mater, I am quite all-right. I just want to be left alone."

Mrs. Anstruther, with maternal intuition, at once

associated Dick's strange behaviour with the letter he had received, of which Mary had jocularly informed her. She was uneasy about her son; obviously he had received disturbing news. She resolutely entered his room and sat down, after closing the door.

"What is it, Dick"? she asked gently.

He silently handed her Edith's letter, which she perused methodically.

"What else could she have done, my dear boy?" she

demanded after reading the letter to the end.

"She could have married me long ago," replied Dick sullenly.

"I hardly think you are quite fair. I am sure you

are not generous, Dick."

"Perhaps I am not. I don't seem to be able to collect my faculties yet. When I do, I may possibly view the matter from a different angle, Mater," replied Dick bitterly: "In the meanwhile I am only conscious

of a deep personal injury."

"You told me the other day that there was nothing between you as yet. You have not, therefore, any claim on Edith. Nevertheless, I believe she loves you. This very letter seems in some way to make that clear to my mind. I can hardly explain why, but I feel convinced that she does," said Mrs. Anstruther slowly. After a pause, she added: "It seems to me that Edith has made a magnificent sacrifice tying her young life up to a human wreck. Surely, Dick, you cannot envy this unfortunate man the consolation of a brief period of happiness. Do you realize that his love for Edith is perhaps even deeper and more unselfish than your own?"

"Mother, mother," wailed Dick, "you are heaping coals of fire on my head. I realize it all only too well, but the feeling uppermost in my mind is disappointment

and jealousy. I freely admit it."
"Dick, my dear boy, you might as well be jealous of the angels in heaven. This poor fellow may be dead and gone even at this moment or at the best he may linger on in agony until it pleases God to release him. generous and write that sweet girl a sympathetic and understanding letter. You will never regret it."

"The Lord be praised for a mother like you," exclaimed Dick impetuously kissing her tear-stained face. "We will both write her. Married or single, I couldn't help loving her and I see now that I am utterly unworthy of her."

Mrs. Anstruther left him to his task and Dick, humbled and chastened, commenced his letter to Edith. It was not easy to write her under the altered conditions. Their relations had undergone a fundamental change,

but Dick proved equal to the occasion.

"It is difficult to reply to your letter," he wrote, "the news of your marriage under the pathetic circumstances you describe naturally proved a shock to me, but further reflection enabled me to see the heroic side of your decision. If I cannot rise to the same plane that you occupy, I can at least appreciate and admire your motive. I think I can even become honestly reconciled to the earnest hope that your suffering husband may be spared for a time to enjoy the happiness inseparable from life with the dearest, sweetest woman I know. . . . Fate has decreed that I must not now think of you as my future wife, but nothing can destroy my love for you. I will mention the subject no more, but you must promise me that nothing will be permitted to stand in the way of our friendship. This, at least, you may concede freely and without a disloyal thought to your husband. As to myself, I must bear my cross as cheerfully as I can. . . . Mother has been a tower of strength to I learn to lean on her more and more. She is writing you herself. . . . . "

Edith received the letter after a strenuous night of nursing her husband. He had recovered sufficiently to permit of his removal to an institution where his case

could be given the attention of specialists, but he showed slight improvement and often suffered agony in spite of the ever-larger doses of narcotics administered. Edith was pale and thin and showed the effects of constant attendance in the sick room. Her resisting power was weakened and she wept bitterly after reading Dick's letter.

### CHAPTER NINETEEN

HE WINTER had come, the creek was frozen solid and a mantle of feathery snow covered the prairies. The cattle, after their morning feed, would slowly wend their way into the hills in Indian file and browse on the naturally cured grass, pushing the snow aside with their muzzles. At night, the herd would start back to the buildings, bellies extended, and enjoy their evening drink and stuff themselves with sweetsmelling hay or green-feed. When a severe blizzard was blowing, they would remain around the buildings, crouching against the lee-side of the sheds, backs humped—the picture of shivering discomfort. For days, while the winter storms would blow, they would barely leave the grateful shelter to fill their bellies from the well-stocked feed racks. This was the sort of weather that took the beef off the herd. The intense cold, which generally followed these winter tempests, did not mend matters much. It was an anxious time for the stockman.

But when a cold spell reached its climax and the snow crunched most loudly under the ice-encrusted hoofs in the calm, bitter morning air, clouds would often begin to form over the mountain tops in the west. Presently they would darken and rise, displaying a narrow expanse of clear sky between the snowy crests of the Rocky Mountains and the black clouds above. A thrice welcome chinook are! The cattle, sniffing the air, sense the coming of the warm blasts from the balmy Pacific. They toss their heads and playfully lock horns or hook each other. The cattleman, casting appraising eyes over his dwindling haystacks, wends his way to the house with a cheerful news that a "chinook" is coming. The cold spell finally breaks before the blustering westerly gale, the snow melts upon the hill-top,

and man and beast, once more relieved of the physical strain of maintaining animal heat against the intense cold, which has held the prairies in its unmerciful grip for so many anxious days, resume their normal lives.

During the summer season, activities around the Anstruther buildings were exceedingly limited. The men were all out on the land. Farm implements of various kinds had to be brought out, oiled and got ready from time to time. The work teams were stabled and attended to. The bull generally occupied his loose box, and a few lonely milch cows meandered in during the evening and were confined in the corral at night, so as to have them handy for the morning milking.

But when the short days and cold nights of winter arrived, the scene changed to one of hurry and bustle.

Field work had ceased and the live-stock needed regular attention. Loads of feed were hauled from the stacks in the field in great box racks. The first snow was a welcome sight. The cattle did better rustling on the range and it was easier to pitch hay into the racks when

mounted on sleigh runners than on wheels.

The social side of life was not entirely neglected. Occasional dances in the village and neighbouring ranch houses brought the young element together, and the older people were able to catch up with their reading, which generally had been much neglected during the strain and stress of the busy summer season. The nearest approach to isolation came during occasional spells of severely cold weather, often many degrees below zero, when those who had no urgent business away from home much preferred the comfortable fireside or working in the shelter of sheds and stables.

The Sage took his walks in almost all kinds of weather. When a severe blissard was blowing he might be persuaded to forego his daily constitutional, but he would generally go to the village in the "flivyer" for the mail with whoever undertook that task, which

was generally Mary, as Dick found his days all too

short, doing his share of tending the live-stock.

The winter had been rather mild and Dick had been able to go easy on feed. With any sort of luck he should have a stack or two to spare, which would be very acceptable for the spring work. The cattle were in fine fettle, everything considered. Their skin was soft and supple. He liked to handle them now and again and "feel" their condition of health. He was gaining experience daily under Wesley's able tutorship. Dick had a natural eye for live-stock and was an apt pupil. He soon learned to pick out the good ones with unerring skill.

Billy Purdom was running pretty near the wind financially. The money he had received for his contract on the irrigation system had enabled him to pay nearly all his small bills, but very little was left to see him through the coming summer's work. Dick had promised to stake him to seed grain. The interest had not been paid on the mortgage, but Billy anticipated no difficulty about this, as the company was aware of the misfortune that had befallen him the previous year. He thought he would be able to manage. He was not spending a cent except on absolute essentials and Mrs. Purdom had proved a tower of strength throughout this trying time. Her chicken money had almost defrayed the entire grocery bill. Bill concluded that things might easily have turned out very much worse.

Mary had been to see them now and again and had, unostentatiously, contrived to supply a good many little household luxuries, much to the delight of the children. The heroic fortitude displayed by the Purdoms under the stress of an intensely disappointing experience was a revelation to her. She began faintly to appreciate the tragic side of pioneer existence and to admire the ndomitable purpose and pluck of this family, whose sole object in life apparently was to create a home upon

the little piece of prairie they had homesteaded, in the face of all obstacles. Mrs. Purdom was expecting another baby in the spring and had been unable to pay any visits to the "castle" lately, where she had always received a warm welcome. Mary, therefore, went to

see her oftener than usual.

No one could enter the Purdom shack without becoming aware of the pathetic little economies that last year's destruction of the crop had rendered so imperative. Everything was clean as usual. The frugal meals were nourishing enough, but every tiny luxury, dear to the settler's heart, had been abandoned. The familiar bottle of pickles was seen no more. Sugar was doled out with a careful hand. The tea leaves were dried and used a second time. Coffee had disappeared from the menu. Their problem was to live off the farm as completely as possible. Cash was a precious possession in any emergency of that sort. It must be carefully husbanded. Cotton flour sacks did duty as dish towels, the soap was home-made. Wood was used for heating and cooking, with a little coal put on last thing at night to keep the frost out of the shack. Billy hauled the coal from a small mine a score of miles away.

And in Billy's department of this family enterprise economies were even more rigidly practised. There was no cash available for repairs to equipment and implements, which had to be fixed up by himself the best way he could. An efficiency expert would unhesitatingly have pronounced such a practise as altogether wasteful; but his was a grim fight to stay on the land, where he and his family had taken root. The first law was to conserve his cash resources and to avoid contracting debts. Only by doing so could he carry on through

another season.

He had lost the finest crop he had ever seen on his land. It was utterly wiped out in a few hours on the eve of harvesting. It represented the sweat of his brow

and the life-blood of his tired body. It represented the daily bread of his wife and children. How glorious it had looked on the very evening before that fatal hailstorm, when they had walked around the golden fields to feast their eyes on the fat of the land. What hopes they had built on the apparently secure foundation of this bountiful yield! How humbly and devoutly they had, night after night, prostrated themselves before retiring, offering up thanksgiving to God on high for the great reward he had bestowed in return for their labour!

On the night following this calamitous event, they had said their customary prayers. Mrs. Purdom, realizing that a new little life was about to be committed to their care, remained on her knees longer than usual. She had much to pray for. Lack of money meant lack of many things she had hoved for. She must brave the hazards of childbirth in their own little home, deprived of the comforting presence of a trained nurse. She must arise from her bed and wearily attend to the daily routine long before she is physically fit to stand the strain. Ah, that is what a crop failure means to the pioneer's wife! She pays in health and strength when nature frowns. It is her life against cold cash. But thank God! Mrs. Purdom came from a breed that had always lived close to the soil. She was strong and husky and would face her ordeal bravely when the hour came.

IME, the great healer of all wounds, had exercised its soothing influence upon Dick's mind. He had, with the loyal help of Mrs. Anstruther, victoriously fought a grim battle with himself. He now saw things in their proper proportion and regarded Edith's self-sacrifice with unstinted admiration. His love for Edith had grown with the rigid mental discipline he had imposed upon himself. He had heard from her at uncertain intervals and had written her cheering and comforting letters in reply. Poor Gerald was constantly hovering between life and death and only his seemingly abnormal vitality staved off the inevitable.

The mail had arrived; there was a letter from Edith. His mother handed it to him. The envelope had a deep

black border. He opened it impatiently.

"It is all over," she wrote. "The poor boy passed away the day before yesterday. Aunt Selina was with me at the end and I do not know what I should have done without her. We buried him to-day and he is now at rest with his comrades-in-arms, which was his last wish. He had been unconscious for days on end and previous to that had suffered frightfully. It may seem callous, but we must all regard it as a happy release. He realised that if he had lived he would never have been free from torture and misery and would have been chained to an invalid chair, and he could never have reconciled himself to that sort of an existence. repeatedly told me that he wished to die and prayed for an early release. Bear Dick, you have been a wonderful comfort to me through it all and I shall never forget it.... I am completely worn out in body and mind and Aunt Selina is taking me to England tomorrow. I shall sleep and sleep for ages. I have hardly closed my eyes for a week or more. . . . I shall write

you as soon as I am settled down. In the meantime you know my address. . . ."

March had come in like a lion. Storms had raged and snow was piled up high against every obstacle that would hold the whirling flakes in their mad flight. This heavy snowfall was a good omen. It would give the grain a fine start, if driving winds and hot weather did not frustrate the kindly effort of nature. green grass would presently make its appearance on the bare hill tops and southern slopes, the first evidence of the birth of another spring. With the first taste of green vegetation the cattle would spurn the dry hay. Labouriously twisting their tongues around the short herbage, they would vainly endeavour to gain a mouthful of the precious substance. But nature would not be hurried. Better to feed these impatient brutes the new grass in microscopic doses to begin with. Too sudden a change from dry fodder to luxurious grass would bring in its train scouring and all sorts of physical ailments. Dame Nature knows what she is about!

There is much to be done on the farm. The frost is beginning to leave the surface of the land and there is no time to be lost in these northerly latitudes in getting the wheat seeded. The season is short and woe betide you if you fail to get the grain in promptly, and perchance miss the effect of that important early shower, which often makes all the difference in the ultimate yield. Harness is mended and collars cleaned and softened. You cannot run the risk of collar galls and sore shoulders in the busy spring time. Everything must be in readiness for the day when the warm sun has drawn the frost out to a sufficient depth to permit

of seeding operations.

Corrals and stables must be cleaned out. The accumulated droppings of the live-stock is hauled out on the land to be summer-fallowed. There is little opportunity for such tasks when the field work is in full

swing. And the penalty of delay is failure. The farmer works against time from spring to fall. Each operation on the land has its own time limit in latitudes where the season is short and the rainfall frequently scanty. Late seeding means frozen wheat. Late breaking fails to rot the sod. Late summer-fallow defeats its own object—the storing of moisture and killing of weeds.

It is a frantic rush from spring to harvest.

This, of all years, the farmer must give the best that is in him. Real war prices at last prevail. An opportunity of a lifetime has come. Wheat has recently taken a spectacular upward swing and stays firm at a dizzy height. Two dollars a bushel. Eureka! farmer is going to have his inning at last. Dick has sold at a dollar and seventy-five. He jubilantly proclaims the soundness of his waiting game. Now, for a long steady pull to produce another crop of forty-one bushels to the acre. Just think of it! Seventy-one dollars and seventy-five cents an acre! And there is no sign of the end of this horrible war. Starving multitudes in Europe are clamouring for Western Canada's hard wheat and there is much talk about the "profiteering" farmer. Great God! Billy Purdom, profiteer!

The season opens up splendidly. Rain falls during seeding operations, warm weather follows. The green shoots begin to peep through the black loam. Then one day Billy appears in frantic haste at the "castle" and rushes unceremoniously to the telephone. An impatient prolonged ring. The doctor's house. Is the doctor there? Yes, one moment. Mrs. Purdom's time has come. The gray-haired medico gets into his car and breaks all speed limits to Billy's shack. Mrs. Anstruther packs a little bag and jumps into the family flivver arriving at Purdom's before Billy reaches home

on his panting pony.

Mrs. Purdom, between spasms, wanly smiles a welcome. Ah, what a relief to have a woman around!

## The Fruits of the Earth

Mrs. Anstruther, the wise mother, knows. The doctor is now at the door and, after a hasty examination, announces that everything is well. Mrs. Anstruther busies herself with washing up the breakfast dishes and getting a plentiful supply of hot water ready. Billy meanwhile nervously paces up and down outside the shack, looking in, miserably, every now and again to receive cheerful assurances, that everything is progressing splendidly. He scrambles off from time to time to perfunctorily attend to the exacting chores. Hogs must be fed and cows must be milked, even though sickness, or grim death itself, stalks through the settler's abode.

At last . . . after an eternity of anxious waiting—a feeble cry. A boy has been born unto him. Mrs. Purdom relaxes her pain-racked body and falls into a sound sleep of utter exhaustion. Everyone moves on tip-toe in the house; the patient must not be disturbed. The children are comfortable with the Anstruthers and the doctor is sprawled in a chair stealing a much-needed nap. He was up most of the night with another case in the village and there is a limit to human endurance. God bless this grizzled, hard-working, self-sacrificing servant of suffering humanity. The Purdoms of this earth, alas, are slow pay. May he get his well-earned reward in Heaven above!

### CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

HE SUMMER which started out so auspiciously is not maintaining its earlier standards. The crop got away to a good start. Then the heavens seem to have forgotten how to weep. Anxious eyes are turned towards the skies. Ah, now we are going to have a life-giving shower! Do you see those black, threatening clouds gather in the West? At last we are in for a blessed rain! But presently the clouds dissolve, the promising symptoms vanish. The pitiless sun again shines in mockery upon the parched fields and the despairing farmers. Old-timers nod their heads wisely. They know. They have been through all this before. This alternate clouding up and clearing up looks to them uncommonly like a dry season.

Billy Purdom is in the deepest depths of despair. This was to be the year that would put the farmer on his feet. High prices, ready markets, the world loudly clamouring for bread! And this Billy Purdom, "profiteer" in the people's daily bread, looks at his drooping grain, feebly struggling to maintain life on the sunscorched fields. It is almost beyond the limit of human endurance. He must make a last frantic effort to keep his head above water. How can expenses be further curtailed? What additional, pitiful, sordid, little economies can be imposed upon their frugal, hard-

working existence? Ah, that is a problem.

Poor Billy and his poor work-scarred wife go over the household budget time and again and pare and pare to the very bone. But Mr. and Mrs. Billy have been reared in a hard school from childhood. The pioneer spirit is within them and, as time goes on and the crop condition goes from bad to worse, they resolutely and philosophically face the desperate situation with such fortitude as daily communion with the Almighty brings them. God's will be done! That's the final word on

the subject.

At the "castle". Dick's disappointment has been These people are not of the same breed as the Purdoms. They, in their comfortable and dignified seclusion, have never been buffeted and jostled by cruel fate. They have never been knocked down and propped up, and knocked down time and again by They have not the misfortune's smashing blows. capacity for endurance born of life-long privations. Dick sees his dream of wealth and independence go glimmering. Fear begins to possess him. What if all his ambitious plans should prove fantastic? What if he should lose everything and he and his family be compelled to go forth into the world bereft of that nest egg which had in the past ensured them all a comfortable existence? One fearful imaginary eventuality after the other haunts him by day and turns his hours of sleep into a succession of ghastly nightmares. Dick is taking it hard. . ...

"Of course, I am not a farmer, Dick, but I cannot understand your gloomy attitude at all," said the Sage. "You don't strike me a bit as being, what they call in the vernacular, a 'quitter'. The drouth is most disappointing, we all agree upon that. But just think of that splendid two hundred acres of irrigated crop, standing waist high and promising an almost pheno-

menal yield."

"Yes, I know, Dad. I see things all out of proportion. When I compare our position with that of poor Billy Purdom, I do feel ashamed of myself. I have perhaps become a trifle self-centred and a little adversity is probably good medicine for me just now."

"I sympathize with you, my boy. I understand your disappointment, but the most effectual way to forget your own troubles is to shoulder those of your neighbour," observed Mrs. Anstruther. "My heart bleeds for those

brave, hard-working Purdoms. Just compare our state with theirs. We must all do our best to help them, however hard providence may in the end deal with us."

"Darling Mater, you are always thinking of others," cried Mary, stooping down and kissing her mother on the forehead. "Really, we would be less than human, if we allowed these people to suffer without giving them

a helping hand."

"I suppose I ought to be damned well ashamed of myself," confessed Dick humbly. "I spend my days moaning over my own troubles while you people are always thinking of others. After all, we shall do very well, thanks to Dad and his irrigation scheme. I'll have to do a little high financing I expect; but we are in a pretty fair position when everything is said and done."

"Well, Dick, you can safely count on us all to help tide over any difficulties that may face us," said Mrs.

Anstruther, encouragingly.

"It cheers me up tremendously to hear you say that, dear mother, but we will cross the bridge when we come to it," replied Dick, seemingly affected by this manifestation of sympathy and understanding on the part of the family. "I shall probably have no wheat to sell this year and that, of course, is a serious blow, but we will have ample feed and the live-stock is doing splendidly. I am going to see the bank and hope to arrange for an extension of my cattle loan and if I can stave off our land payment for a year, I expect we shall manage all right enough."

Dick, accompanied by the Sage, motored to the village the following day to see the bank manager. Lester Hill greeted him cordially and they were soon deep in a serious discussion of the crop situation. The bank had a large amount of money outstanding in the district and the head office was getting nervous. Cattle values were not quite as steady as they had been.

The virus of fear quickly inoculates the minds of those who hold the purse strings, when the western crop is threatened. The whole of Canada sits in tense expectation from June to August each year. "What is the state of the Western crop?" is the burning question of

the day.

"I hardly think I shall have any trouble in arranging for a renewal of your paper, Dick," remarked Hill, after Dick had told his story and laid bare his financial position before the critical mind of the man of money. "I'll take the matter up with H.O. at once and I shall recommend that your request be granted. But take my advice, old man, and cut down expenses in every possible way you can. You are lucky to have lots of feed to carry you over. Some of our clients won't be in that happy position and we shall probably have to insist on the liquidation of cattle loans in a good many of such cases, which won't add to our popularity."

Dick left the bank with a sense of relief. Decidedly, the thing to do was to face these problems one by one and to cease fruitless and unnecessary worry. He pondered over the wholesome admonition to cease fretting over those inevitable calamities which never seem to happen. What a ridiculous fool he was to distress himself so over their affairs, which, as a matter of fact, were really in very decent shape. Lester Hill had congratulated him upon his financial position, which he had pronounced as exceedingly favourable. And then he thought of Billy Purdom and his problems. . . Dick momentarily felt an uncontrollable desire to apologise to someone for ever having worried about his own puny difficulties.

While Dick was busy in the bank, the Sage leisurely called for the mail and afterwards wandered aimlessly up and down the Clearwater equivalent to Broadway and Regent Street. It was just a typical prairie small town. The principal street faced the railway track.

A rickety side-walk ran from one end of the "business" section to the other. Several red-painted grain elevators completely dwarfed the red-painted station building. The unwritten law, he reflected, seemed to be that everything connected with a railway must be adorned with a dull, ugly red. But no! A large steel gasoline tank, mercifully painted gray, is half hidden between two elevators. Rebellion has evidently reared its head in defiance.

There were a couple of implement agencies with all sorts of farm contrivances displayed on a rough, wooden platform adjoining the offices. Two general stores, with dingy panes and sticky fly-paper, partly covering the dust-laden window exhibit. A small, shabby school-house and several churches of more or less delapidated appearance. There was also the blacksmith shop, Vulcan casting malevolent eyes on the "garage" next door, once the town livery stable, but now dedicated to supplying motor car requirements as well as catering to the care and accommodation of tired farm teams.

There was one large hotel with windows carefully boarded up and front doors wide open to wind and weather; a silent victim of the prohibitory liquor laws recently enacted. Another hotel with the barroom closed and bolted, the rotunda dotted with wooden chairs and blue enamel-ware spittoons. This was now the village "club", where the natives rubbed shoulders with the dapper commercial travellers from the city.

Also a drug store with a modest stock of patent medicines, a soda fountain and a few score glass bottles with mysterious Latin inscriptions. Its revenue, however, depended largely on filling prescriptions for alcoholic stimulant, issued in emergency cases by the local medico. Comparing the number of such prescriptions with the grown male population of the village, one would at once conclude that the general state of health

was desperate indeed. The entire absence of undertaking establishments, however, somewhat reassured the

inquiring mind.

The residential part of the village edged, here and there, into the business section, but was mainly confined to the street immediately behind and running parallel with the main thoroughfare. If these streets had names or numbers, the secret was carefully guarded. The homes of the Clearwater citizens were invariably fenced in to prevent stray cattle and horses from breaking windows and chewing up the family washing on Monday afternoons. A few adventurous and progressive residents had, once upon a time, apparently been fired with a laudable ambition to beautify the village by planting poplar trees in their front yards, which had eked out a short and miserable existence and then expired. The gaunt skeletons of many of them were still standing, dry and leafless, a silent warning against Truth would compel the honest city innovations. observer to record that Clearwater was a bleak, unlovely little dot on the expansive plains.

The week following Dick's visit to his bank, Lester Hill called him up by phone and informed him that his head office had been graciously pleased to grant his application for an extension of his loan. This was good news and somewhat mitigated the depressing effect of the continued absence of rain. The same night Dick awoke with a start. A slight patter on the roof was clearly audible. Could it be possible? He hurried to the window and verified the extraordinary fact. It was actually raining and just in the nick of time. Dick wanted to go out in his pajamas and get soaking wet. He actually wanted to feel that blessed, drizzling down-He restrained himself with difficulty and crawled back into-bed, spending the rest of the night listening to the welcome sound above his head and fearing every moment that it would stop. It could not possibly

make a decent crop now, but it would help marvellously. He might even get his expenses back and a little over. Towards morning he fell into a deep sleep and was late for breakfast.

When he appeared, he encountered boisterous hilarity. It was still raining and the parched land was eagerly drinking in the vitalizing liquid. The prairie grass showed a green tinge. The whole world was happy.

"Well, there your are, sleepy head," exclaimed Mary, as he came downstairs. "We are all positively

starving."

"Different countries, different ways," the Sage observed. "On a morning like this in England we should feel rather cross and severely criticize the weather.

Here it fills us with joy."

Rain fell from time to time during the next month and the transformation was wonderful to behold. A crop of fifteen bushels per acre was now freely predicted. This proved, as a matter of fact, to be a somewhat conservative estimate for the whole district. And the price of wheat was still soaring, so that the farmers, on the whole, received a very fair return for their work. Billy Purdom found himself in a position to carry on comfortably, much to the delight of all his friends.

The summer drew to a close. There were rumours of an early peace and news from the front was eagerly awaited. At last it came. The armistice was an accomplished fact and the great blood bath was ended. Our loved ones would soon be on their way home. The world would now endeavour to settle down and take stock of the frightful blow that had been administered to civilization. Would our institutions survive? Could we go on from where we left off in 1914? These were questions agitating men's minds as we entered the after-war period in 1918, with its orgie of extravagance and inflated prices.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

the farmer has again pitted his brawn and muscle against what capricious providence has in store for him this season. The early summer is dry, the churches offer up prayers for rain, but God has apparently forgotten the farmer in this corner of the earth. Day after day the sun glares upon the yellowing prairies, seorching winds sap the vitality of the green grain, leaving it limp and drooping as evening draws near. It is partly refreshed by the cool night and heavy dew, only to take up the hopeless battle for life again, as the sun rises the following morning and pitilessly proceeds upon its devastating mission.

The great banks, foreseeing a feed shortage, begin to scrutinize outstanding loans with super-critical eyes and presently warn their country managers to make no new advances. To further complicate the situation, the world's commercial and financial horizon is dark and cloudy and threatening. Great institutions shiver in fear—many crumple up and disappear. The man of money is a sensitive, clusive animal. He never willingly takes a chance! Woe betide you if he has his talons in your affairs when the period of doubt and stress and fear descends upon the land!

Then falls the crushing blow. The United States passes emergency tariff legislation penalizing cattle and meat importations to the point almost of total exclusion. The market for beef in Canada breaks in spectacular fashion. Values tumble from the satisfactory position recently maintained to a point in utter demoralization never equalled in the history of ranching and cattle raising in the West.

This is the signal to administer the death blow. Cattle are rushed to the market in blind panic, often by

order of nerve-racked creditors, and what little remains of stability vanishes almost over night. Tales are heard of cattle sent to the stockyards barely realizing sufficient to pay feed and freight charges. The great basic industry of the West lies in the gutter, wounded and bleeding! Enormous loans have been made by the banks against hundred dollar cattle, which are now practically unsaleable. The security has vanished. The bottom is out of everything!

Dick one fine morning receives a phone message from the Federal Bank at Clearwater asking him to call, which he does, in fear and trembling. Lester Hill is just a shade embarrassed. He likes Dick and is on

friendly terms with the family.

"Anstruther," he said—poor Dick notes apprehensively the unusually formal address—"I have been instructed by Head Office to make a special report on all my live-stock loans. I have your financial statement here and I want to go over it with you." Dick nodded

acquiescence.

"Of course, we must revise the valuation of your assets in the light of what has happened to the market," he suggested. "Your equity in the cattle seems to be completely wiped out. You could not now, realize sufficient on a sale of them to pay the bank. That naturally creates an impossible situation for us, as you can readily understand. My general instructions are to obtain additional security in such cases. We don't want to force a sale now, and, I need scarcely assure you, that we want to help you all we can."

"I appreciate that, Hill," replied Anstruther, "but I don't know off-hand what additional security I could pledge. I certainly don't want to sell on the present preposterous market and practically give our cattle away. Besides, I had expected to realize more than sufficient on the steers alone to pay you out in full, leaving the heifers as a foundation for a breeding bunch."

# The Fruits of the Earth

"Your father, I understand, has some capital. Could he not deposit some securities as collateral to your loan?" asked Hill.

"That's absolutely out of the question. I am determined that no more of his capital shall be risked in any venture;" was the quick reply.

"Well then, you will have to give the bank a mortgage on that half section of land you paid out on when you came back from overseas."

"I hate like blazes to do that. My father advanced the capital I used to obtain title and it is practically the only borrowing asset I have," pleaded Dick, miserably.

"Supposing we take this mortgage as an additional security and that I apply for an extra thousand dollars' credit? Will that help you out? I think I could perhaps get that through, but it is only fair to tell you that H.O. is getting mighty pernickety these days and it is quite possible they may turn it down."

"I wouldn't mind so much giving a mortgage on that condition, Hill," replied Dick, with some hesitation. "If I had an additional thousand dollars of credit to draw on, I think perhaps I can manage to worry through another partial crop failure. Do the best you can for me, and, in the meanwhile, I will talk the matter over with the family."

Dick called for the mail, which he stuck in his pocket in preoccupied fashion, and proceeded on the way home. He was apparently approaching a crisis in his affairs. It was no use trying to hide the unpalatable truth any longer. The cattle had shrunk seventy-five per cent in value. His own investment and a couple of years' feeding was irretrievably lost, unless he could arrange to hold for a better market. He decided to run up to the "Lazy H" to consult Tremaine, who generally had his finger on the pulse of the market, before he

discussed the problem with the family. No need to

worry them unduly.

Dick merely remained at home long enough to throw the mail on the table and tell his mother that he was going on up the creek and hoped to be back late the same evening. He carefully avoided Billy Purdom's place, making a detour to escape him. Dick felt he was carrying a pretty heavy load himself at the moment and simply could not bear to be reminded of others worse off then he was. He reached the "Lazy H" early in the afternoon and swallowed a couple of glasses of milk, which constituted his mid-day meal. Tremaine was fortunately at home.

Dick explained that he was very anxious to have his advice on the prospective cattle market. He communicated to Tremaine as much as was necessary of his

financial affairs.

"It is very difficult to say just what is going to happen to cattle, Dick," said Tremaine. "If I knew positively, of course, I could make a fortune for myself. But my opinion is that it would be unwise to sell just now. A tremendous number of cattle have been thrown on the market—far more than could be absorbed—that has had the effect of unduly depressing prices. Possibly within a month there will be a slight improvement. Then I should sell my steers and reduce the bank loan by whatever amount they realize on the open market. I would not advise you to hold your beef beyond that point, because I see no reason for any spectacular upward movement for a very considerable time."

"That seems very sound advice," replied Dick, re-

flectively, "and I shall certainly act on it."

"It is merely my judgment, but I think you will not go far wrong in following that line of action," said Tremaine.

"I am very much obliged to you. Of course, this business is fairly new to me and as you have handled

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thousands of cattle in your time, your judgment is

bound to be better than mine."

"Well, that is the plan I shall follow with my own beef. But come up to the house and have a bite before you start back. It is a pretty long trip. In the old days it would have taken us three hours by team."

Dick reached home in time for supper and afterwards summoned a family council and explained the whole situation. The Sage was philosophical and Mary optimistic. Mrs. Anstruther perhaps was a bit down-cast. She had arrived at the time of life when financial problems are apt to assume distorted proportions. Her anxiety was, however, largely on Dick's behalf. She realized what a killing disappointment all this must be to him.

The family agreed that the plan of mortgaging Dick's old farm to the bank was the only feasible step to take and, to cut a long story short, within a week after his interview with Hill, Dick was advised that the bank would be prepared to make the additional credit

available to him in consideration of the added security. This was a load off Dick's mind.

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

CDITH had long ago settled down to her old life in London. She had written rather more frequently since her return to England and had frankly told Dick that she was very dissatisfied with idling her time away. Dick had noted this new turn in events with a hopeful heart and had in his letters, quite naturally, painted life in the West in the most attractive colours. He had enlarged on Mary's interest in her poultry establishment and his mother's quiet contentment in their prairie home. Dick's special pleadings had evidently produced results. Edith had actually expressed envy at Mary's busy and useful life as compared with her own aimless existence, and had lately hinted that she would dearly love to enter some suitable occupation. The war had apparently done its work. Edith could not now become reconciled to an idle existence.

One evening, after the family had retired, Dick sat in his chair and mentally reviewed their correspondence during the past year. Had he been fair to Edith? He saw before him years of worry and hard work, conceivably ending in dismal, abject failure, should the present unfavourable conditions prevail much longer. He had not deliberately prevaricated to her, but he felt somehow that his letters had not been sufficiently explicit and had probably conveyed an erroneous impression. If disquieting thought—she should, by any chance, discover that she loved him and should determine to throw her fortunes in with him and his career and frankly told him so, as he felt certain she would not hesitate to do once her mind became clear on the subject, what would be his answer? How would he convey the truth to her without mortification? Dick became panic-stricken—the iron entered his soul. He must at

once tell her the trick cruel fate had played upon him. He could not rest until he had conveyed to her the unvarnished truth, until she fully understood the very worst that remained to be told. His renunciation must be final and complete!

He arose heavily, and crossed the floor to his desk. It was late, but he was oblivious of time. This message must be written and sent on its way before another sun

should set.

"... I have mentioned in my letters the dry seasons we have had," he wrote, "but I have hated to acknowledge that failure stares me in the face and that our resources have been seriously depleted as a result. Unless normal years return, I see before me the possibility of a life of toil and privation solely dedicated to make amends to my family for having plunged them into comparative poverty, through my reckless attempt to satisfy a wholly unwarranted ambition to succeed. . . . I bitterly rebuke myself, dear Edith, for having embarked on this doubtful enterprise in such a foolhardy fashion. . . . All my dreams of success and affluence, which I never have ceased to hope I might some day have shared with you, have been completely demolished as far as I can now see. . . . Of course, everything has not been irretrievably lost as vet. Good seasons and more favourable markets might still put us on our feet, but it is all in the lap of the gods, and our present prospects leave little hope of my accomplishing all that I so confidently set out to do. . . . The burden I carry is often heavier than I can bear. I feel to-night that I must tell you the plain, unvarnished facts. . . . I am afraid you will think that I have not been quite frank with you and it hurts my pride more than you can realize to convey to you the brutal truth of our situation. . . I do not deludemyself into believing that you have changed your mind about the last answer you gave me when I pleaded

my case in England. . . . At any rate, I have now nothing to offer you. . . . If you should still have a warm spot in your heart for me, all I can hope is that you may forget all about me and my misfortunes. I cannot now decently aspire to a place in your life which I have so far proven incompetent to earn? God knows I have tried and it almost breaks my heart to have to confess to failure. . . ."

Early next morning Dick drove to Clearwater and despatched his doleful missive. He felt relieved and realized that he could have done nothing less than to end his romance once and for all. Man's work awaited him on the farm and he would endeavour to forget his own disappointments and would consecrate all his energies towards mitigating the effects of the series of misfortunes that had so persistently dogged his footsteps. His life must now be devoted to his family.

The drouth seemed endless. Old-timers assured him that never in the history of the district had they experienced so long a rainless period. The prairie was yellow and the grain crops were at last succumbing to the absence of rain. Puny heads were forming on straw five to six inches long, too short to be cut with the binder. Some crops were hardly worth saving with labour at prohibitive prices. Wesley and Dick decided to cut the grain with the mowing machine and rake it into windrows, in the hope of saving enough to supply seed for the following year.

But the irrigated land was a sight to gladden the heart. The alfalfa made a splendid stand and cut four tons to the acre. The green-feed had grown to mammoth proportions—in some cases it reached to Dick's shoulders. He decided to ripen fifty scres of oats, which threshed a hundred and twenty busiels to the acre. At the end of the season he found himself with two hundred tons of alfalfa, three hundred tons of green-feed and almost six thousand bushels of oats,

which, by that time, had advanced to a most satisfac-

tory price.

The Purdoms had practically nothing. Neither feed, nor grain nor money. Billy's crop was almost a total loss. He had not been to see the Anstruthers for a long time. Unconsciously he acted on the impulse of the wild animal about to die which drags itself into the densest bush to expire unseen. Mary went to the shack now and again to cheer Jennie up. She always returned depressed and unhappy.

The Anstruther family was sitting around the supper table one day late in the fall. Mary had been

over at the Purdom's place all afternoon.

"Dick," she said. "I have done rather better with my chicken operations than you would expect. What am I going to do with my carefully hoarded treasure?"

"Oh, buy dresses or automobiles or yachts or anything that takes your fancy, old girl," he replied jocu-

larly.

"I am afraid that Windigo Creek doesn't lend itself particularly to yachting, so I think I shall pass that up. And our little flivver seems to answer all purposes, so why burden ourselves with a Rolls Royce? As to dresses, I have all I want."

"Well, then, give it to the Salvation Army," sug-

gested Dick, helpfully.

"That is a much more sensible suggestion; but suppose we practise charity at home first?" she answered.

"I am sure I am a most worthy object of charity. I need a new pair of overalls very badly," replied Dick. "Or, perhaps, you might even make a trifling addition to the price of the overalls and magnanimously pay up my note at the bank. What are you driving at, Mary?"

"I want to help the Purdoms, Dick. They are absolutely down and out. I was over there this afternoon and I had a straight talk with Mrs. Purdom.

She opened her heart to me, and weepingly told me the

terrible position they are in."

"Mary, you certainly are the best little soul ever. By all means, help them all you can and I will see that he gets some seed and feed grain. You can depend on that. I fully intended to do that much for him, although I have said nothing about it to him. He is very sensitive, you know."

"That is sweet of you, Dick, but I don't think that will be necessary. You need every pound of feed and grain you can lay your hands on to keep things going here, and my plan will, I hope, enable Billy Purdom

to purchase what he needs."

"My dear Sis, you don't seem to realize what these things cost nowadays. How far would your little hoard go with feed at fifteen dollars a ton?" demanded Dick.

"Don't you speak so contemptuously of my little

hoard. How much do you think I have got?"

"Oh, I suppose fifty or seventy-five dollars," replied Dick.

"My dear boy, you seem unconscious of the fact that you have a comparatively affluent sister. I can write my cheque for fourteen hundred dollars with every assurance of having it promptly honoured," Mary proudly announced.

The family fairly gasped. "Do you mean to tell us that you have made fourteen hundred dollars out of those skinny hens of yours?" demanded Dick, incred-

ulously.

"I most assuredly have," answered Mary, enjoying the revelation which, by the way, she had carefully

planned for some time.

The Sage might have been in the secret. At any rate he expressed no surprise. "Dick, old man," he observed, "this is a story with a useful moral. Is there any particular cause for wonder in Mary's ability to

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save this amount in two or three years? I don't think so. She has attended strictly to business and looked

carefully after the small things."

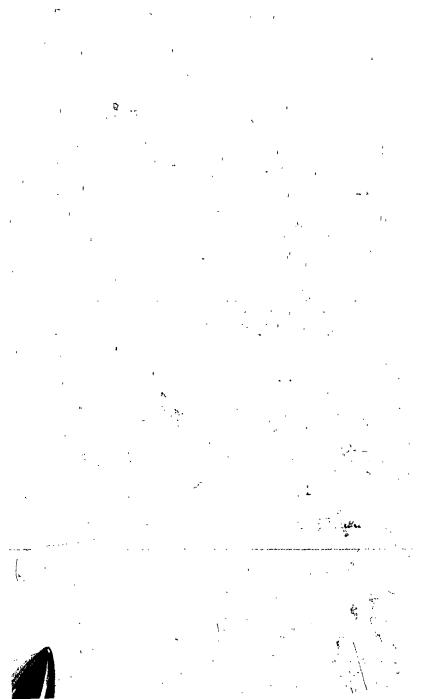
"Yes, Dad, I see your point. It is perhaps a reflection on my own management, that I have failed to appreciate these incidental sources of revenue at their true importance. I suppose we are all apt to make that mistake," added Dick reflectively. Then, as if the real significance of Mary's success had just dawned upon him, 'Why, Mary, you would almost be able to take care of our entire cash household outlay at that rate."

"Of course I could, Dick, and with very little effort indeed. There is an unlimited market for poultry products and all that is needed to double my profit is simply to do a little better than doubling my plant. I really can't understand why you men persist in focusing all your attention upon wheat and beef. Even poor Billy Purdom has made that mistake for all of his years of experience in the country," contended Mary.

"I believe you are right, Sis. You had better see Billy yourself and play Lady Bountiful in person. Whatever amount you may loan him, he will pay back

if he lives, you can rest assured of that."

BOOK III
THE HARVEST



# CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ARY, was in deep and earnest consultation with Billy Purdom and his wife. She had arrived unexpectedly and had, diplomatically, intimated that Dick was very much worried over their affairs and had asked her to find out if there was anything that could be done to assist them. She conceded that misfortunes, such as they had encountered, were almost beyond remedy, but it was only neighbourly for them to ascertain if they could in any way help them over the rough road.

The Purdoms were deeply touched. This, after all, was one of the compensations of pioneer life. The mere conviction that they were not standing absolutely alone in their unequal fight was balm to their harried

souls.

"Miss Mary, you are just the salt of the earth to bother your pretty little head about us. I can't tell you how grateful we both feel, but I am afraid," he added dejectedly, "that I shall have to try my luck in the city and see if I can get a job. I can't stand up under all this much longer."

"That, of course, may be the only thing for you to do, Mr. Purdom, but let us have a little chat about it all first. We might be able to find a way for you to carry on here and give the farm another trial. These

unusual seasons can't go on forever, you know."

"I now owe Dick for seed and feed and I know he has his own troubles with his cattle deal, so I couldn't think of being a further burden upon you folks. No," he added despondently, "I must take my medicine and do the best I can working out for somebody else if I can get a chance."

Don't worry about us; we are quite all right.

Now, tell me what amount in cash would see you through another season," asked Mary, persistently.

"I have been over that time and again, Miss Mary," answered Purdom wearily. "I figured out that seven hundred dollars would pay up all my bills and give me seed and feed. I went to the bank about it, but Mr. Hill turned me down flat. I don't blame him a bit," he hastily explained. "I have no security at all for a loan of such a large amount. No, it is the end for us and it's no use wasting any sympathy on this family. We will have to get out and try to make a living elsewhere."

Not so fast, Mr. Purdom. We are not half through yet and I know you to be the kind of man to go down

fighting," admonished Mary.

"I have fought and we have gone down, Miss Mary. It is too late now. I'll just have to throw up the

sponge."

"Yes, you have indeed fought a good fight, but you are going to fight some more," announced Mary with decision. "I have a little money of my own, you know, and I mean to act as your banker. Here is my proposal. I am going to lend you the seven hundred dollars you need and I am also going to lend Mrs. Purdom two hundred dollars on the understanding that you will build her a chicken house, just like mine, and let me stock it for her from my surplus."

Mrs. Purdom, casting reserve and dignity completely aside, rushed across the little room and hysterically enfolded Mary in her bony arms, tears streaming down her haggard face. She tried to speak, but overpowering happiness robbed her of articulation. Mary kissed her tear-stained face again and again, patted her back reassuringly and tried to smile. But, alas, she was too much of a tender-hearted woman herself to remain wholly proof against the pathos of the moment, and perforce joined Mrs. Purdom in a happy outburst of

emotion. Billy, completely bewildered, looked on in wonder.

"Just to think that my dream of a beautiful, big chicken house is to come true at last!" ejaculated Mrs. Purdom, amidst sobs with eyes shining as she hugged Mary ever tighter to her bosom.

"Jenny, Jenny!" said Billy warningly, "you surely won't want Miss Mary to make such a sacrifice for us."

"Stop that ridiculous talk, Billy Purdom," cried Mary emphatically. "This is a business proposition and you are going to pay me a good stiff rate of interest, both of you. If you don't look out, I shall charge you seven per cent, and I am only getting three per cent now. So you see I am just an ordinary Shylock, looking out for a profitable investment."

They all smiled and Billy was effectually silenced. Mary wrote out a cheque for nine hundred dollars, while Billy made out his note for one year. Mary hurried away. This had been a trying, though an intensely

happy, event.

When Mary had left, Billy shamelessly grabbed his wife in a long, lingering bear-hug. She, overflowing with emotion, burst into tears again and sobbed her

heart out on his capable shoulder.

"Jenny wife," he said slowly, "I thought God had forgotten all about this little family, but see, He sent one of His sweet angels to lift us out of the slough of despond. We omitted our morning prayers to-day. I am afraid we have been backsliding lately and, in the hardness of our hearts, that we must have forgotten them too often. Bring the children in and let us offer up thanksgiving to God Almighty for His great goodness to us and pray, earnestly, that that little girl may get all the happiness she deserves out of life."

Billy Purdom strong, hulking animal that he was bent his work-toughened shoulders and recited his

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prayers with shaking voice and moist eyes. Courage came seeping back. God was with him, he cared not who and what was against him. Fight? He would fight like a bear-cat to keep a roof over the heads of this family. He would fight as he had never fought before!

#### CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

DITH was sitting in her bedroom, eagerly devouring Dick's doleful letter. Sit wept and she smiled alternately. What was Dick and his failure or success to her? He was just a good, old pal, nothing more. Yet, sane, rational young women do not weep over the work-a-day disappointments of capable young men, amply able to look after themselves. The fact is, and the truth might as well be told, that if Edith at that moment could, magically, have gratified one solitary wish, she would impulsively have blurted out to the disgusted genie that what she most wanted in this world was to be instantly transported to Dick's side.

"What a fool I am," she said, audibly and severely. She simply couldn't account for this extraordinary mental excitement. She must be ill. Possible she had eaten something that disagreed with her. She really must pull herself together, because the Hon. Mr. Reginald Pelham, one of her perennial admirers, was dining with them to-night and Aunt Selina would certainly expect her to act the part of the vivacious and captivating young widow. She, of course, could not be expected to understand that Edith should seriously take to heart, or be at all depressed by reading, the vicinitations of a prairie farmer of her acquaintance.

But fidith was, nevertheless, very deeply impressed. She could not argue herself out of an almost uncontrollable desire to rush to Dick's rescue with a perfectly shocking disregard of decorum. Aunt Selina and Mayfair would indubitably consider any such impulse as mere madness. Just the effect of war service on impressionable young females, don't you know! Edith, wonderingly, asked herself whether this could, by any chance, be love or was it merely a passing brain-storm or a nervous condition? A critical glance in the beautiful cheval glass convinced her at once that it couldn't

possibly be liver. Her dark eyes were clear and her complexion was absolutely faultless. Even Edith had to admit that. Therefore, it must be love! Poor, trusting Mr. Pelham. He needs our sympathies.

Because Edith, once she clearly realizes the situation, will have mighty little compunction about taking the bit in her teeth. As long as she deems herself wholly unfettered, she had, indulgently, pleased Aunt Selina and gaily, or patiently, played around with the mendoubtless with very disastrous results to some of them. But it is to be feared that Aunt Selina is due to be sadly disappointed. Dick has, at last, struck the responding cord in Edith's tender little bosom. He has appealed to the mother instinct. Dick is in deep trouble, Dick needs her. That call is potent and is always answered by the sort of girl Edith is. And now, of course, we are just beginning to understand exactly

what sort of a girl she really is.

"My darling old Dick," she writes, unconcernedly and unashamed. "I absolutely refuse to be given the congé in this abrupt and heartless fashion. ... You have no idea how you have wounded my amour propre . . . seriously, my dear boy, waiting, if there is anything worth while to wait for, happens to be one of the very best things I can do. And, really, I am beginning to think that I would rather like to wait. I hope I can safely say so and that you will not deliberately misunderstand my motive and construe this letter into a formal proposal of marriage and afterwards perhaps sue me for breach of promise and get enormous damages! Also, of course, on the understanding that you are still able to hold out a faint hope of a suitable reward for such admirable patience on my part ... joking aside, dear, I grieve to think of all the trouble and misfortune that has befallen you. I wish I could help you. You \* must not think that I am entirely frivolous, etc., etc., etc." This would comfort Dick's tortured mind! He

would now don his armour, unsheathe his sword and

take up the battle with renewed vigour.

The year had come to a close and Dick proceeded to take stock of his financial situation. Thanks to the irrigated land, he was able to manage without further use of his bank credit. He had, in fact, made his interest payment on the farm and arranged postponement of principal due. He had also succeeded in making a small payment on his cattle note. After the first stunning blow, followed by a frantic rush to realize: on live-stock in an utterly demoralized market, saner counsels had ultimately prevailed and cattle values had strengthered considerably so that the sale of the steers the following spring would, he hoped, reduce his indebtedness considerably. He made up his mind to spare no effort during the winter to get them into the pink of condition, so as to take advantage of the best market available when the time came.

The Sage had followed the trend of world events closely. He had by pointing out to him the misery and unrest that was slowly driving European countries to the verge of desperation. Even in the cities of the west, the unemployment problem was acute and public relief was the order of the day. He drew comparisons between the lot of the city dweller and that of the farmer

much to the advantage of the latter.

Dick began dimly to comprehend the strength of the farmer's position in a world upheaval such as he had witnessed. He was the producer of the essentials of life-lifted, at least, above the sordid anxiety of pro curing his daily bread. This was no time for ambitious and speculative expansion—the rock upon which he himself had almost foundered. The wise manager. during such a crisis, would jealously husband his resources, cut his cash outlay to the very bone and thus preserve his assets. He had learned his lesson. If only favourable seasons would, mercifully, come, he would ride into a safe haven yet. ...

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#### CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

HE SPRING opened up auspiciously and the I seed went into the ground under unusually favourable conditions. Snow had fallen in large volume during the preceding winter and had left the land in excellent condition for work. A few good spring showers also contributed much needed moisture and sent the seed off to a good start. Wheat prices were still satisfactory. The farmers were in buoyant spirits and had, as far as their creditors would allow them, forgotten the hardships of the past dry seasons.

There is something in the great, expansive plains of Western Canada, in the clean, invigourating air and high altitude, that seems to breed self-confidence and good It is generally conceded that the outstanding characteristic of the prairie farmer is consistent optimism. How providential it is that those, whose destiny it is to face the manifold hardships and disillusions of pioneer existence, should, through the influence of this morale-inspiring environment, be endowed with an unusual mental capacity for taking heart of grace and facing the future unafraid! A new season has opened up with all its alluring prospects and possibilities. Why mourn over the disappointments and dashed hopes of the last two disastrous years? Nil Desperandum!

As a natural consequence of the dry seasons, greater attention had been paid to the further development of the little irrigation system on the Anstruther farm. The land had been levelled and an additional fifty acres had been seeded to alfalfa. The Sage had become an irrigation enthusiast and had apparently absorbed all the available information on the subject. His irrigated garden the previous year had been a beautiful sight to behold. The Anstruther table had been literally loaded with all the tender young vegetables in season all summer long and he had also made a start in growing strawberries, raspberries and other small fruits. The vines and bushes were now loaded with bloom and he was impatiently looking forward to the time when he should be able to place on the table his first dish of luscious berries.

He unconsciously reflected on his past life in England. How tepid and flat it now appeared in comparison with the throbbing, intense interest he had developed in this useful and fascinating undertaking they had, in a thrice-happy moment, embarked upon! He had always loved his books, but were they not, after all, inanimate things? Now he had learned to supplement his studies by explorations in nature's library. His artistic soul revelled in the glory of the great banks of lovely flowers he, with his own skilful hands and in the sweat of his brow, had actually brought into being. The winter afforded him ample time for purely intellectual pursuits. All the long summer days he was in God's great out-of-doors. What a splendidly sane and well-balanced life was his!

Dick had pondered upon the world-wide agricultural depression. He found himself unable to reconcile the low prices prevailing for most of the products of the farm with the rapidly increasing values of labour and cost of manufactured articles required by the farmer. It constituted a paradox which he was quite unable to explain satisfactorily. He stated the problem to the

Sage.

The fact is," replied Mr. Anstruther, "that for the past fifty years the world has witnessed a huge overproduction of food-stuffs brought about by two main causes. The colonization of the enormous expanses of virgin agricultural lands of the North American continent must be regarded as the chief factor in the situation. That was rendered possible only by the greatest railway development the world ever witnessed and prob-

ably ever will witness. That again was only made feasible by the invention of cheap processes for the manufacture of steel. Without these, the virgin lands of this continent could only have sustained the population that settled upon them. Their products could never have reached the markets of Europe."

"You mentioned two causes," commented Dick.

"The second factor in over-production was the introduction of labour-saving farm machinery, which doubled and quadrupled the output capacity per man on the farm. It is a marvel to me how the world has been able to absorb this staggering increase in food The spectacular growth in the population production. of Europe, during that period of plenty, seems to have saved the agricultural industry from utter stagnation and this expansion was, in all probability, the direct outcome of cheap food."

"I am deriving no particular comfort from this explanation," replied Dick. "The opening up of new agricultural areas is still going on in Western Canada.

Is there going to be no end to it?"

"My dear boy, 'God is in His heaven and all's well'. I have kept my eyes and ears open during the years we have been here and I see no reason why anyone should complain of conditions in this country. True, we have been having an over-abundance of dry seasons in our district lately. Quite unprecedented the oldtimers tell us. We may, therefore, take it for granted that we have seen the darkest side of the picture. And yet, are you deliberately going to tell me that a hardworking man could not have kept himself and his family in moderate comfort off his own farm during these unfavourable seasons?"

"If he owed nothing and developed all the little sidelines, such as poultry and dairying. I suppose he could pay his taxes, buy necessary clothing and live," admitted Dick.

"Very well, then. You concede that in the most disastrous years he can live in fair comfort. That apparently implies that in the average or in the favourable year, he can make a not inconsiderable clear profit. It seems to me that such a prospect should look reasonably cheerful."

"Always supposing that he has no debts," inter-

jected Dick.

"That, of course, is the whole kernel of the argument," replied the Sage calmly. "It would be a calamity for us, for instance, to lose crop after crop, not because we could not live, but because we couldn't pay our obligations to the bank, to the man we bought our land from and to other creditors. The moral seems to be that people in our position should not settle in this country unless they are satisfied to get down to fundamentals in the way of living and improve their surroundings and living conditions only as the cash is available to do it with. The real trouble seems to be that the vast majority of settlers cannot wait for a few years to reproduce their old surroundings in this new country. If you want my candid opinion, Dick, credit is much too free here."

"I am not going to dispute that, Sir," Dick answered.
"I have seen many good men absolutely fail because they over-burdened themselves with quite unessential implements and additional land which they had not the capital to properly work. But we are all sinners in this respect, so we should not throw stones at the other

fellow."

"Admitted. But if we, with our eyes open, take the gambling chance in our operations, knowing all the time what the penalty is likely to be, why blame the country or the state of agriculture when the penalty is exacted? It isn't sporting."

"Well, it seems to me that banks and commercial concerns expect too much of frail human nature in

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making credit quite so free. They are equally to blame,"

replied Dick, pugnaciously.

"I am not trying to place blame on anyone, my boy. What strikes me is that it should be impressed on newcomers with inadequate capital that they must do as the old-timers did, namely, do without."

Dick went out of doors to oil and grease the "fliver," and the Sage resumed his reading.

### Chapter Twenty-Seven

T WAS thought necessary to lay out a new main distributary in connection with the irrigation system and certain changes had to be made to correct obvious faults in the present plant, which had been constructed rather with a view to economy and quick results than to efficiency. Bob Simpson, C.E., had again been sent for to make the necessary surveys. Mary had met Simpson at Clearwater with the car and he spent the afternoon going over the irrigated land with his instrument, Dick holding the rod.

The evenings were getting warmer and after supper the family congregated on the verandah. Simpson was also an irrigation enthusiast and, therefore, a man after the Sage's own heart. He had been professionally employed on a great irrigation project recently completed east of Calgary. He described the wonders of that vast enterprise, with its enormous hollow concrete dam in the Bow River. The conversation drifted around to the "Lazy H" scheme, which Simpson had constructed years ago and which the Sage had always admired as the last word in efficiency.

Mr. Tremaine is an excellent manager and has certainly made the most of his opportunities on that

flat." observed Mr. Anstruther.

"Yes," conceded Simpson, "I think he has." methodically relighting his pipe and leisurely blowing a cloud of very strong tobacco smoke into the atmosphere, he added reflectively: "It is queer how this country either makes or breaks the average man."

Mary, sensing a story, looked up from her fancy work and asked innocently, "Good gracious, Mr. Simpson, surely there could be no question of breaking such a staid, hard-headed individual as Mr. Tremaine.

Why, one would naturally think he was born that

way."

"No, Miss Mary; that's where you are entirely mistaken. He was just about as green as any man I ever saw when he first came to the country," contended Bob.

"Really," replied Mary, doubtingly, endeavouring to lead him on. "That seems almost incomprehensible."

"Well, he was, for a fact. As it happened, I was on the little delegation to welcome him on his arrival in Calgary many years ago."

"Was he as important as all of that," demanded Mary. "There were no delegations to welcome us."

"It wasn't exactly that kind of a delegation," replied Bob, reminiscently. "Poor Tremaine, he did have a rough time of it. I have often joshed him about it since; but somehow he doesn't seem to enjoy the joke. I suspect that he lacks the sense of humour."

Bob was apparently wound up, but everyone remained silent for a moment, regarding him with an inquiring

look. It was his move.

"It was in the old prohibition days," observed Bob deliberately, "but we were generally able to get a drink at the 'Criterion' on Stephen Avenue, where a highly respectable banking office now stands. The westbound train used to arrive at two in the morning, and those of us who were able to navigate safely by that time would saunter over and see who got off. The Criterion had a glamour all its own. It was always owned and run by English gentlemen of very pleasant parts. It was one of the aristocratic enterprises of our rising cow town in those days.

"One night there was an unusually large and hilarious party assembled at the 'Cri'. Everyone had, I am afraid, partaken a shade too freely of the prohibited liquid. About train time we strolled over to the old, ramshackle station and Number One presently pulled in. A solitary traveller alighted, booted and spurred

and decked out in very horsy regalia. He gathered up his bags, approached Tom Browne, the then proprietor of the 'Cri', and haughtily inquired where the bally hotel was. Tom invited him to follow us, as we departed from the station to resume our places before the 'Cri' bar, and hospitably asked him to join us and have a 'nightcap', which the lone traveller agreed to with alacrity.

"One drink led to another as generally happened. Everyone was 'setting them up'. Our new friend became talkative. He volunteered the information that he was going to ride for the 'Bar U'. He was an expert horseman and had hunted with England's most famous packs. There was, in fact, nothing 'with hair vin', as he declared, that he couldn't ride. Tom was getting disgusted with this. He edged up to the boaster, tapped him gently on the shoulder and, looking at him owlishly, said in solemn tones: 'My dear boy, you couldn't ride a rocking horse.'

"The newcomer sputtered and fumed over this unheard of affront and promptly got ready to fight. 'What do you mean by insulting me, you damned barkeep,' he shouted, while proceeding to divest himself of his

Keep your shirt on, young fellah,' replied Tom, imperturbably, in his characteristic Oxford drawl. 'Out here we don't generally talk too freely about what we can do. Now, he added, reflectively, 'I have a little pony around the corner. Supposin' you try your remarkable horsemanship on him to begin with?'

"Lead on, quick. I'll show you how we handle horses where I come from,' cried the youngster excitedly.

'I'll ride him from hell to breakfast.'

"Three or four of us went on ahead with Tom to get the horse ready and the rest of the gang remained with our young friend. Tom led us down the street to the town harness shop. In the wide doorway stood a

beautiful, shining, dapple-gray charger, with flowing mane and tail and gleaming eyes. It was the wellknown, life-size wooden horse reposing on the sidewalk during the day, exhibiting harness or highly ornamental stock saddles. He was conveniently mounted on a solid, low platform, with rollers beneath. One of us cut around the corner to the livery stable to procure a stock saddle and bridle and we soon had Pegasus dragged out into the middle of the street, all caparisoned for the frav.

"Our friend, led by the hilarious gang, was approaching, somewhat unsteadily, and one of us quickly manned each leg of the wooden horse. It was pitch dark-no electric lights in those days. Eric Hanson stood in front of the impatient steed, frantically grasping the bridle, and incessantly shouting 'Whoa, there' while we were industriously working the hind legs up and down in imitation of a wicked, prancing buck jumper.

made a very awe-inspiring picture.

"As the others approached, one of our party let out a piercing yell and hobbled to the sidewalk in apparent

pain, dragging his left leg helplessly.

"Bear down on his tail, for God's sake,' he cried. 'He almost kicked the stuffing out of me.' He sat down on the edge of the sidewalk, nursing the injured member, rocking backwards and forwards in well-simulated agony. The horse angrily bobbed up and down, the victim of a seething rage, and despairing efforts were made to pacify him sufficiently to permit of his being mounted; but apparently to no avail. The Secretary was a second and the second

"Blindfold the ugly devil,' shouted some one; a happy inspiration which was immediately acted on. Amidst great difficulty a handkerchief was ostentatiously tied over his eyes. For a moment, this seemed to have

the desired effect.

The state of the s "'Quick now, get on,' yelled Tom and our hero was unceremoniously hoisted into the saddle by many

willing hands. He had barely got his feet into the stirrups, when the real tussle commenced. The horse bucked and reared, indulging in every known kind of outlaw antic. The rider—now in the saddle and now in the air—white and terror-stricken, pulled on the unyielding bit for dear life, hysterically pleading with us not to let go our hold of the inturiated beast. Ejaculations of encouragement came from the bystanders. 'Good old egg,' cried Tom. 'Stay with it. You have got him! By God, he is going to break him after all!'

"At the very climax of the excitement someone shouted: 'Police!' The lone town constable was approaching at a lumbering trot and the gang promptly took to their heels. With a last superhuman effort, the two of us operating the hind legs hoisted them up in the air, our friend shot over the horse's neck and landed on the ground with a dull thud, head first, while we, discreetly, made ourselves scarce. The policeman gathered him up and promptly hustled the new arrival off towards the town dungeon, before he quite realized what had happened.

"The 'Cri' was in a state of uproarious excitement. Peals of laughter broke the stillness of the early morning hour, as the details of the hoax were recounted. Presently someone suggested that the poor devil was slated to leave by the morning stage for High River. What was to be done? A committee was despatched to visit the Police Station and, with the aid of a friendly Justice of the Peace, our hero was finally bailed out and escorted to the stage with his bag and baggage just in time for departure. He was a sadder, but wiser youth,

was young Tremaine.

"As we parted he grasped my hand," Bob related.
"'Old man,' he said 'I owe this fellow Tom an apology.
I boasted I could ride anything with hair on; but that brute of his is one too many for me. Why,' he added, completely lost in amazement, 'he has a mouth like

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a bally brick wall!' Bob gasped in consternation as the

stage moved off. ....

"Would you believe it, Mr. Anstroner," he demanded, "that fool boy actually went away utterly oblivious of the fact that he had ridden a wooden horse!" Roaring laughter greeted this absurd climax to Bob's ridiculous story. Mary, wiping her eyes, solemnly assured him that she should now be frightened to meet the staid Mr. Tremaine, She would never, she declared, be able to greet him with a serious face again.

"That little party set me back ten dollars, being my share of the fine and five dollars towards repairing the damage done to the horse," continued Bob sadly. "By the way," he added, "the old nag is still with us going strong. Go and see him the first time you are in Calgary. He seems to become more and more solemn as the years go by. I guess he misses the good old days when even a wooden horse could have some real fun."

### CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

JUNE was approaching and the crops were wonderful to behold. Optimism reigned supreme—normal seasons had evidently returned, after the prolonged dry spell. Dick had sold his steers and had, as he anticipated, realized comparatively ruinous prices, but, in spite of this, he had been able to reduce his cattle note to three thousand dollars, and the bank seemed very well pleased with the new standing of his account. He still had seventy-five heifers left which were calving almost daily. Wesley now proved his real worth. It was no small or easy matter to calve a big bunch of heifers. All sorts of complications arise with the first calf and incessant care was needed.

Prices of most commodities were becoming almost prohibitive and wages for farm labour reached unprecedented heights. The increasing cost of farm operation was seriously worrying the whole country. If only a good crop materialized and the price of wheat kept up, all would be well. The risk was great. So far everything looked favourable but "there was many a slip". Dick was frightened to even contemplate the

result of another crop failure.

The Sage was deeply absorbed in studying the striking economic developments now being unfolded before the world. Labour unrest followed by acute economic distress was the order of the day. The wealthiest nations were suffering almost as acutely as the wartorn parts of the world. One school of thought claimed it was merely a "state of mind". He saw the whole world in a condition of flux and wondered where it would all lead to:

The law of Supply and Demand had, up to modern times, functioned with almost unfailing precision. Came the introduction of the factory system, the hiving of labour in great centres of population, and

the consequent destruction of home industry. Then followed industrial combinations, price and rate agreements, the organization of labour, the fixation of wages, the imposition of indolent working conditions and curtailment of working hours. Obviously, all these developments had only one economic object in view, namely, to defeat the free functioning of an immutable law. Cost of commodities and cost of labour were apparently to be the same, whether the supply was greater than the demand or vice versa.

The farmers were now being made the helpless victims of the industrial worker, ever clamouring for shorter hours and higher pay. How could the agricultural classes even hope to keep their own young skilled men anchored to the farm? How were they going to compete with the "white lights", lazy working programme and high wages of the city, which were rapidly being pushed to ridiculous and impossible lengths? All these attractions were drawing away from the farm many of the most progressive and capable boys.

This question was agitating the minds of the farmers' organizations throughout the West and the Sage felt deeply sympathetic with their anomalous position in the general scheme of things, and apprehensive of the evil effects of an industrial creed which now openly proclaimed that idleness was synonymous with happiness and honest, faithful work with grief and elavery.

Aleck had stelephoned from Calgary, inquiring if it would be convenient for him to stay overnight with the Anstruthers and asking for a lift from Clearwater, if any of them happened to be in the village with the car. Yes, it would be quite convenient for Aleck to come and Mary would pick him up when she called for the mail. He was to wait for her at the Post Office.

Mr. Anstruther had answered the phone and made the arrangements and Mary was too obedient a daughter to enter any serious protest. In fact, it is very much to be doubted if Mary would have taken the trouble to change the programme, even though she could have

done so without any inconvenient explanations.

Aleck had been most punctilious at their last meeting and Mary just took it for granted that their little romance was over and done with definitely. But, contrary creature that she was, Mary seemed to find no particular comfort in that reassuring thought. Aleck would, of course, bestow his affections elsewhere one of these fine days. That contingency, however, did not appear to please her to any great extent either. She uttered an impatient protest as the car struck a badger hole in the trail and jolted her violently. "Well," she soliloquized, as she again settled herself in the seat "I just can't help it and won't worry over it, that's all." Very soon after Mary came to this eminently sensible conclusion, the car rolled up at the Post Office door and Aleck rushed out and eagerly assisted her to alight.

But was this really and truly Aleck? Gone were the overalls, heavy boots and khaki shirt. Aleck now appeared, resplendent in a jaunty straw hat and a well-fitting gray summer suit. His tan boots and silk socks were immaculate, his necktie and linen in the very best of taste. Surely this was Aleck of Piccadilly imperson-

ating Aleck the cow man!

"It was awfully nice of you to come all the way into Clearwater to pick me up," he ejaculated after formal

greetings had been exchanged.

"Bless you, my dear man," replied Mary, nonchalently, "I had to come in for the mail." And by way of explanation: "You know, the arrival of the mail is the greatest daily event in our placid lives." Mary was evidently a skilful dissimulator and affected a fine disregard for the presence of Aleck.

"Never mind, it was kind of you anyway," he con-

tended doggedly.

Mary called for the mail, tied a string around it

and threw the bulky parcel in the tonneau, started the engine and they were off. They drove through the village in silence and soon gained the open country.

"I have been in Calgary," said Aleck hesitatingly. "So I would gather," replied Mary in a matter-of-fact voice.

"I am starting a farm of my own," he added.

"Oh, that's splendid. Where is your place?" she demanded.

"To tell you the truth, I haven't selected the landlas yet, but I have my eye on a place not very far from the Purdoms," he replied.

"Then we will be neighbours."

"I sincerely hope so. You see," he explained, "I have interviewed the Soldier's Settlement Board and have arranged for the loan of the necessary capital to give me a start. I, fortunately, put my back pay and war gratuity in the bank when I came back from the front and have had sense enough to save a little money since. I suppose this will strike you as an unexpected gleam of human intelligence on my part in view of my past record," he added, diffidently and mysteriously.

"Don't be absurd," Mary replied impatiently.

"Well, anyhow, the upshot of it all is that I shall have about three thousand dollars of my own and they are going to loan me five thousand dollars for the purchase of land and equipment, which should give me a pretty fair start."

"I should rather think it would," cried Mary enthusiastically. "They will be simply delighted to hear about it at home."

"And you are pleased, too," ventured Aleck, uncertainly.

"Of course, I am pleased," she answered emphatically and, after a pause, added, "I'll have to teach you all about chickens now,"

"Miss Mary, I want to tell you something about myself, if you will listen to me."

"Fire away;" she answered vulgarly. Mary, for some reason, was feeling very reckless at that moment.

"I came into a very respectable little fortune some years ago upon the death of my parents," he commenced slowly. "I was just twenty-one years of age and, I am afraid, it went to my head. I became mixed up with a pretty disreputable gang of youngsters in England, with more money than brains and industriously devoted almost my entire time to card playing and following the Aleck paused and looked at his companion appealingly. "But that is not all. I bought a horse and entered him for a rather well-known steeplechase. I came in first and, as I had staked pretty nearly my entire cash resources and all I could borrow on this race, I had cleared quite a small fortune, as the betting had been heavily against me. This proved my final undoing. A protest was lodged on the grounds that my horse had been entered under a false name and the committee sustained the protest. I left England deeply disgraced. While I was in hospital in France, the patient in the adjoining cot recognized me and confessed that he had been implicated in the sale of the horse to me under a fictitious name and told me the whole story. He was anxious to give me a written statement, but I was indifferent and rather unsympathetic. The following day he had a bad turn and I have never heard from him since, as I was sent to England while he was still delirious. He probably went 'West'. I am afraid I have not the knack of telling my story in a very convincing manner, Miss Mary. Does it sound improbable to you?" he asked anxiously.
"Not in the very least. I don't think I could be-

"Not in the very least. I don't think I could believe you would ever do anything dishonourable," replied Mary emphatically. "But it was most inexcusable, and rather a little cruel of you not to gratify

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this man's wish at once. You see the position it has now

left you in."

"I know, but it seemed at the time like raking up the dead and forgotten past and my first reaction to the man's confession was naturally one of indignation. At any rate, I missed my opportunity it seems, so I still stand branded before the world as a calculating thief and an unscrupulous blackguard," admitted Aleck dejectedly.

"You have certainly succeeded in making a pretty bad mess of your life, poor boy," cried Mary, while she surreptitiously wiped a stray tear from her cheek, "but your friends on this side of the water would always

believe your own version of the story."

"And you yourself have no doubt that I have told

you the absolute truth? You believe in me?"
"Why, of course."

"Thank God for that. Nothing else matters. But to cut a long and very disgraceful story short," he continued, "my money was soon lost and with my last hundred pounds I made tracks for Western Canada. My relatives were naturally scandalized and hailed my departure with unmistakable relief. I have had no communication with them since, excepting seeing one of my uncles after I returned from the front."

"I am, of course, utterly ashamed of myself in relating this story to you," confessed Aleck miserably. "All I can say in mitigation of my idiotic conduct is that I never did anything actually dishonest. I have been," he added disconsolately, "just a common, ordi-

nary wastrel."

"Oh, I suppose you were no worse than heaps of foolish boys in England at this very moment," Mary commented, thoughtfully. "You have worked hard out here for a good many years and I really don't see why you should brood over the errors of the past."

"It is just splendid of you to take such a tolerant



view of my asinine conduct," cried Aleck. "I somehow thought you might." They drove along in silence for a few moments. He was not making very much progress with his errand. He turned to Mary and asked timidly: "You don't actually despise me then?"

"Of course, I don't. It would be ridiculous to despise anyone for falling a victim to mere youthful folly."

"Miss Mary," he ventured hesitatingly, "with this confession out of the way, will you forgive me if I again plead my case with you? I should now, I hope, be able to offer you a decent, little home. . . . I can't tell you how deeply I love you and all you mean to me," he declared, with passion.

Carried away by his emotions, and encouraged by Mary's happy acquiescent smile, Aleck impulsively put his great paw over the little hand that was firmly grasping the steering wheel. What could a girl do under such circumstances? Mary blushed, deliciously. And-tell it not in Gath! There was neither trace nor indication of disapproval or remonstrance in her happy face. . . . And then the car hit that badger hole in the trail and Mary found herself landed almost squarely in Aleck's eager arms; the flivver, carreering wildly over the prairie sod, landed lightly against a friendly fence post and stopped with a groan.

Aleck gazed at Mary with shining eyes and Mary snuggled down comfortably in his fierce embrace. He kissed her again and again, and whispered the orthodox, endearing words into her willing ears. . . . There were no bones broken and the car was apparently all right, so there was no immediate necessity for letting Mary go about her business again. In fact, her chief business at that moment was indubitably with Aleck.

"Mary, darling," he whispered. "I learned to love you through an accident, and now I hold you in my arms through another accident. Blessed be all acci-

dents!"

And then they laughed happily and started the car off again, with averted eyes. The reaction was coming and Mary began to think that the whole proceeding was a shade irregular and undignified. It was not at all her idea of the climax to a romantic love affair. Her parents had not been consulted and she herself had been rather carried off her feet—or, at least, off the seat—and altogether she was beginning to feel that the subject was not by any means closed.

"Aleck, dear," she murmured, "I do feel rather a bit ashamed, literally throwing myself in your arms."

"Bless your dear little heart, you did nothing of the sort; this good, old fliver was responsible for it all. I am going to buy one just like this as soon as we are married and," with decision, "badgers are going to be strictly preserved on our farm. I am so full of happiness, darling, that I want to tell everyone about it at once."

"That's just what you mustn't do," interjected Mary, with determination. "What will mother and father say? They have not the least inkling that there is anything of this sort between us. No," she added, "we have been quite unconventional enough so far and we must now come back to earth and proceed according to custom. Please don't even mention that we are already engaged until you have spoken to dad and mother."

"Right-o. I will be as mum as an oyster and proceed with all the decorum the occasion demands," cried Aleck gaily. "What do I say anyway? Tell your father that I have an important subject to discuss with him which touches the future happiness of one near and dear to him and so forth? Oh, just leave all that to me! I'll have them both in tears before I get through. But, tell me, are you really and truly happy, darling?"

"You haven't given me much chance of expressing any feelings of any sort so far, with all your irresponsible



chatter," replied Mary severely. But melting to Aleck's pleading eyes, she continued earnestly, "I was never so utterly happy in my life before." Aleck drew her close and kissed her cheek—and another accident was narrowly averted. It is dangerous to kiss the driver. But what did he care?

"Aleck, dear," ventured Mary hesitatingly, after a pause, "I think I ought to warn you that it is not going to be an easy matter to reconcile father and mother to that unfortunate racing episode of yours. They are old-fashioned in their ideas, I am afraid. Of course," she added hastily, "they will not doubt your word for a moment, but they both entertain an instinctive horror of anything that savours in the least of notoriety."

"I would give almost anything if I could be spared that fatal interview, Mary. I know I shall have to grovel in the dust, and I hate to lay bare my youthful follies before anyone, leave alone people I am so very anxious to impress favourably. Great God," cried Aleck, miserably, "will I never get through paying

the price?"

"Never mind, dear; tell the plain truth as you told it to me. I can't believe that they will place obstacles in our way once they realize how much it means to both of us. If they do, Aleck," continued Mary, deliberately, "much as I love them both, I am afraid I shall have to assert my independence."

Aleck, greatly cheered, kissed her hand silently. The knowledge that Mary would stand by him, no matter what happened, almost completely removed his pre-

vious reluctance to face the impending ordeal.

As they drove up to the house, the tea-bell sounded. Mary entered, looking severely self-possessed and dignified: Aleck's face, on the other hand, seemed so transparently happy and his smile so infectious that everyone was presently engaged in cheerful conversation. He explained, with apparently unnecessary am-

plification, the proposal he had up with the Soldiers' Settlement Board and all that he hoped to accomplish in time. Aleck was diplomatically paving the way and the family was frankly delighted to learn of his improved prospects. He was becoming a general favourite.

"Dick, why don't you apply for a loan from the Board to take up your cattle indebtedness?" asked

Aleck suddenly.

"What would be the particular object of that, old man?" demanded Dick. "It seems to me it would be merely a case of borrowing from Peter to pay Paul."

"I can see several good and sufficient objects. In the first place, you borrow at five per cent from the Board. I suppose you pay eight per cent to the bank,"

contended Aleck.

"Correct."

"Your present loan is temporary and might at any time become pressing, while the Board gives you a long term of years for repayment."

"You are right, Aleck. But could I obtain a loan?"
"No question about that at all. Cases such as yours

"No question about that at all. Cases such as yours are especially provided for," was the cheering rejoinder.

Dick at once saw the great advantage of cleaning up his bank liability with an extended loan at a much lower rate of interest. And it would be a heavy burden off his mind. That note had worried him more than he cared to confess. He would go to Calgary the following day and put in his application. He wondered why he had never taken the trouble to inquire into this matter before.

### CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

HE PURDOM FAMILY had taken a new lease of life. Billy had again assumed his usual cheerfulness and why not? His little floating debts had been cleaned up and he half suspected that Mary would prove a pretty lenient creditor. If the worst came, she would not permit him to worry. The family was in good spirits and in the best of health, the baby was growing like a weed and Billy had visions of the time when he would be old enough to help with the farm work.

Children, of course, are an asset on the small farm. There is no call there for birth control or any of the newfangled notions and theories that idle city women preach about. The Purdom children would have lots of nourishing food to eat. That would always be the least of Billy's troubles. With good fat land to produce sufficient potatoes and other vegetables, no matter how bad the season might be, a few milch cows, poultry, pigs, and all the rest of it, Billy's family would never starve.

Of course that was not the only problem. Taxes had to be paid. They were not very heavy, however, as there was no organized school district on the creek as yet. Cash was needed for groceries and clothing, the precise amount depending largely upon the crop prospects. If things looked pretty good, Billy would loosen up. But when crop failure was imminent, here is where the chief economies would be effected. It was simply marvellous what Jenny could then do with almost any old rag that would contemptuously be cast aside by the haughty city dweller to who, we are told, the world owes a living. Now, Billy had never worried very much as to whether the world owed him and his family a living. If anyone had suggested that

it did, it is to be feared that Billy would have been more or less bewildered. He would not have been able to visualize precisely the sort of process that could be worked out, whereby this very desirable result could

be attained. Billy was not profound!

He had long ago realized that the most important thing in his life was to obtain a small but regular supply of ready cash. With this safely in sight, he was prepared to face the world. Without it when bad seasons were encountered, his was a life of worry and misery. And Jenny, God bless her, had now solved the difficult problem for all time to come. The idea, of course, was Miss Mary's, but she simply wouldn't take any credit for it at all.

The big chicken house had been erected and was now running to capacity. Crates of eggs found their way to Clearwater with increasing frequency, to say nothing of the tender broilers that would soon be ready for shipment to the city. Such delicacies were, of course, for the big centres where the world owed the inhabitants a living. They would have been wasted on the coarser palates of Jenny and Billy, who alas, had their own living to make in an unsympathetic world! Be that as it may, the Purdom family was beginning to see daylight ahead and a great load had apparently been lifted from Billy's prematurely bent shoulders.

The crop situation, too, was unusually favourable this year. Billy had taken a sporting chance on putting in fifty acres on last year's stubble. It was not good farming. He was well aware of that fact, but desperate situations needed desperate measures and Billy figured that with fair luck he could, as he expressed it, "get away with it". The bank would have told him, caustically, that he was tempting providence, but what of

that?

In the first place, he didn't owe the bank anything, for the very simple reason that, having no floating assets,

—whatever that might mean, Billy didn't quite understand—he could not qualify as a borrower, which might, indeed, be a blessing in disguise as long as there was a Mary Anstruther in the settlement to act as banker for those who, like Billy, were without the pale, financially.

In the second place, there was no particular reason why Billy should not tempt providence this year. His very livelihood was dependent upon the smiles of the fickle jade. If he won out, he would be able to pay up all his liabilities with the price of wheat that now prevailed. If he lost . . . well, he would only lose his seed and his labour . . . the labour performed in the sweat of his brow. And Billy was not looking for union wages—they were not for the farmer. Besides, Billy was a pretty sporting loser. Decidedly, there was no reason why Billy Purdom should not tempt providence this year just a shade more than he had done every other year of his checkered career.

"Jenny," he said to his faithful partner in life, as they were taking their usual Sunday stroll around the fields, "I do believe we are going to have a crop this year."

"Please God we may," she replied. That's all. . . . There was no note of complaint in her voice. It was an earnest hope expressed in simple language. If further misfortune came Jenny would bear the cruel burden as she had borne many others. Her life had been dedicated to toil and hardship and she expected little else. The weekly paper told her of the economic strife raging throughout the world-of strikes and lock-outs and riot and hatred-of the suffering of the wives and children, camp-followers of the industrial army on battle bent. And all this amidst plenty. . . . Factories were overloaded with orders at extravagant prices and the consumer the world over was indulging in a mad scramble to purchase anything and everything that profiteering shopkeepers were fortunate enough to add to their stock in trade.

And Jenny, simple soul that she was, actually considered herself fortunate in her peaceful surroundings and pitied the poor, mad city people from the very bottom of her generous heart. The five-day week and six-hour day, which embittered men in towns were waging ruinous warfare to obtain, had no particular attraction for Jenny and Billy. Incessant toil from daylight till dark had always been the daily routine, and that, of course, precluded all possibility of brooding over the economic maladjustment that demanded sixteen hours of work from the farmer, while the town dweller characterized his modest eight hours as slavery.

Assuredly, Billy and Jenny were "scabbing". They should have insisted on the "fuller life". Why not? They would probably have used leisure hours more profitably than the city hod-carrier. But, alas, as long as the said hod-carrier demands his bread—and butter, too—at prevailing prices, Billy and Jenny must perforce remain the hewers of wood and drawers of water for

ungrateful society!

Aleck was easily prevailed upon to remain with the Anstruthers for a few days and Mary had at last given him the "high sign", that the auspicious moment had come for bearding the lion in his den, and formally ask permission to press his suit on the object of his affections. The Sage listened in silence to his halting pleadings and Mrs. Anstruther, who had undoubtedly drawn her own conclusions from the very apparent intimacy that had so mysteriously developed between Aleck and Mary during the last few days, was plainly disturbed in her mind. They all liked Aleck, but when it came to entrusting their lone, ewe lamb to any good-looking, pleasant-spoken "maverick", Mrs. Anstruther would naturally have something to say about it.

"Don't you think, Aleck, that we are entitled to know a little more about yourself and your family," she asked gently. Aleck mutely acquiesced, and recited the sordid story about his youthful errors. He did not spare himself. "I don't wish you to think that I am not to be trusted now, because I made a fool of myself as a youngster," he concluded. "My record out here you are fairly well acquainted with and all I ask is that you judge me on that rather than on what is past and gone."

The Sage looked decidedly uncomfortable. His gentle nature recoiled from inflicting pain on any fellow creature, more particularly upon one whom for he had learned to entertain a very warm regard. And then there was Mary to be considered! How could he conscientiously give his consent to this union? To his unsophisticated mind it looked like an exceedingly ugly story at the same time and he was man of the world enough to know that that sort of thing can never be lived down completely. Mary would want to visit England from time to time. A husband under a cloud would inevitably create many trying situations. Mr. Anstruther felt deeply distressed.

"Do you think, my boy, that it would be possible for you to find that ex-groom of yours now and get documentary evidence in connection with that racing

complication?" he asked

"I am afraid not, Sir. I think he would have written me. He probably never regained his mind and is doubtless dead and buried in France long ago. Of course I now realize how foolish I was to temporize. At any rate I could easily have written the hospital and found out what had become of him," replied Aleck. "It seems an almost hopeless task now."

Mrs. Anstruther did not look convinced. She had not been a colonial long enough to have acquired the comfortable habit of taking men and women at their face value. The situation was rapidly becoming tense and the Sage, by way of diversion, asked: "Have you

any relatives we could correspond with?"

"The only one who would be at all interested in me is an uncle of mine in the foreign office. I have neglected him sadly, I am afraid, but he is at least human. But I really doubt very much whether he could tell you anything to my advantage," confessed Aleck with some hesitation. Poor Aleck was not a diplomat. He had lamentably failed to put his case advantageously. It dawned upon him that he was going to encounter severe obstacles. "I realize that I cut a sorry figure. I suppose I shall never be able to live down my early reputation for folly and extravagance," he added dejectedly.

Aleck might have known, however, that an uncle in the hallowed Foreign Office would neutralize many youthful follies in the eyes of an ex-civil service family. The Sage looked interested and Mrs. Anstruther seemed

much more amenable to reason.

"Who is this uncle, Aleck?" demanded the Sage.

"He is my mother's brother, his name is Houghton."
"Do you mean Wm. S. Houghton?" interrupted the Sage.

"That is the man. Do you happen to know him,

Mr. Anstruther?"

"Yes, he is a very old acquaintance of mine and I am sure he would be quite fair to you in answering any

questions I might feel it my duty to ask him."

"I really think he would, Sir, and I have not the least objection to your writing him about me. I had the decency to cut myself absolutely loose from my family when I came a cropper in England and he is the only one I have seen since. I called on him before I sailed for Canada, when I was invalided home, and I think that he was genuinely glad to see me. I promised to write him, but I am afraid I have neglected doing so."

"That was very wrong of you, my boy," contended

the Sage.



"I might as well make a clean breast of it, Sir, and tell you that I have been so mortally ashamed of my early escapades, that I have been obsessed with a determination to cut absolutely loose from my old life and environments and then," he added, "my family lost no opportunity of repeatedly pointing out to me the gravity of my various offences and seldom with tact and understanding. This rankled in my mind so that, I thought, the best thing I could do was to live my own life out here, where questions are seldom asked."

Mrs. Anetruther had by this time quite made up her mind that Aleck was by no means the paragon she had hoped might marry her daughter. On the other hand she fully realized that if Mary really wanted him there would be nothing gained by placing obstacles in the way of their engagement at present. But Aleck would have to stand the piercing rays of the social searchlight. Mr. Houghton must certainly be communicated

with.

"I don't think we need pursue this subject any further just now, Aleck," said Mrs. Anstruther, not unkindly. "My husband will write your uncle. In the meantime, we will say nothing about any engagement, but you

may see Mary as usual."

"You have been most awfully decent about this, Mrs. Anstruther. All I would ask you now is to write at once. I do love Mary so devotedly and," he added, craftily, "I think she is fond of me, too, and I promise you solemnly that if you will give her to me I shall make her happiness my chief object in life and," by way of consolation, "I won't take her far from you either."

"I believe you, Aleck, and we will write at once," replied Mrs. Anstruther with moist eyes. Perhaps she had caught a momentary glimpse of her own early romance and remembered the day when the Sagelong before he acquired all his wisdom—had had a similar difficult interview with her own father. . . .

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Mary entered the room as Aleck left it. His happy smile reassured her. She kissed her wise father on the bald spot and impetuously embraced her mother. Words were quite superfluous. They all understood each other so very, very thoroughly.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY

ICK had experienced no particular difficulty in arranging his loan with the Soldiers' Settlement Board and had, triumphantly, informed the bank that his cattle note would be taken up in full within a short period. Lester Hill had expressed the greatest pleasure over this happy termination of Dick's very unfortunate deal. He would now have a term of years within which to pay for the remaining heifers and at a low rate of interest. With luck, the natural increase would amply take care of all his payments. The lesson had not, however, been lost on Master Dick, who had moved with the utmost caution since entering into

this speculative investment.

The golden harvest was now on. The self-binders went whirring and chattering through the fields, dropping the bundles of ripened grain at even intervals. Men There was followed setting up stooks in long rows. hurry and bustle in evidence everywhere. The farmer looked with satisfaction and relief at the shorn fields. Ah, so much was now actually saved! No fear of hail and frost and to-morrow, if the rain held off, so many more acres would be reaped and stooked and so much more of the great weight lifted off his aching back. It was an anxious time, but each day brought an increasing measure of palliation. God, what nervous tension and muscular strain harvest time exacted! It was the fitting climax of the long, long, anxious summer season. . . . And, when it was all safely over, the blessed relaxation of body and mind!

Dick was pushing his harvest crew to the limit. Wesley needed no goad and he drove the second binder himself. His stookers, however, were of the usual loafing, initerant labour class. Often, when the rain was threatening, the Sage and Mary would come out

into the field and help to get the stocking completed right up to the last sheaf cut before the day's work was done. They both enjoyed the novelty of hard, manual labour and revelled in constructing solid and workmanlike stocks, that would shed the rain and

withstand the blasts of the autumn winds.

There is no sight in the world so beautiful and inspiring as a well-stooked grain field on a bright, sunny day. The neutral tint of the stubble and grain, after being exposed to the sun's rays, is restful and soothing. The picture of the harvested grain conveys to the mind's eye the suggestion of nature in repose. The struggle for life and growth and maturity is over—the cycle is completed. The abundant harvest spread out before the gaze of the onlooker is reassuring. It stills and satisfies the age-old striving for man's daily bread.

The irrigated fodder crops had been mown and saved before harvesting commenced in earnest. Great long stacks of alfalfa and oat hay dotted the meadows. That was a sight worth seeing! The Sage and Dick would stand, silently, gazing at these level, productive fields, with laterals winding their way along the contour of the land, a water gate here and there, impeding the crooked progress of the life-giving liquid. Here was the magic combination—soil, air and water in abundance. The Sage was the wizard who had made all this possible and Dick was conscious of a new and growing respect for this father of his who had always been regarded as an impractical visionary.

There was feed in abundance and he now had a splendid, well-bred foundation herd of cattle, headed by a bull of provincial reputation. Mr. Tremaine had once remarked: "Cattle values will always fluctuate in this western country; but no matter how demoralized the market may at any time be, you will find that the tops will always bring a good profitable price. So

provide lots of feed, use it with judgment and sense and breed good ones. That's the sure road to success." Dick saw the virtue of this advice. He was, without question, on the high road to affluence. He prided himself on having complied with all the requirements laid down by the veteran cattleman. By all rules, he must succeed!

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#### CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

ICK'S love affair had not progressed spectacularly since Edith's memorable confession. The very moment almost he had received her letter, he rushed to his room and poured out his passion in a soulful missive of extraordinary length and vehemence. He told Edith that things were improving slowly. She was not to be downhearted. They would soon be together, never to be parted. Edith had replied counselling patience and rather hinting that she expected deadly opposition from her aunt, the thought of which apparently distressed her. Dick afterwards wrote: ... Crop prospects this spring are splendid. I am full of hope of a change in the seasons. In fact, it almost amounts to a certainty in my mind. . . . I simply cannot fail—it would be impossible. . . . If I am not again disappointed in the crop, you must come to me this autumn. I shall be ready for you. . . ."

Edith did not relish nursing secrets. Her life had hitherto been an open book and her aunt had enjoyed her confidence almost completely. But she simply could not bring herself to tell her about her tentative promise to Dick. And yet, she wanted to go to him. Her surrender had been complete after the self-revelation that came to her on reading his pathetic letter of re-

nunciation. But Aunt Selina was a problem.

".\. I should love above all things to go out there this fall, Dick dear, but honestly, I do not at this moment know how to tell Aunt Selina. I cannot expect you quite, to understand my difficult situation here; if you did, you would sympathize with me. . . . But I am a bit of a fatalist and entertain the hope that time will indicate how our difficulties may be smoothed out. . . . I am absolutely enchanted with the splendid crop outlook and love to have you tell me that I am, in some

mysterious way, responsible for the turn in your luck.

I wish I could really believe this delightful illusion of yours.

Darling old Dick, I do so want to be a help to you and I cannot tell you how I look forward to life by your side.

I enjoyed looking at the snapshots you sent me. The 'castle' has a very comfy and prosperous appearance.

It does seem strange that this is to be my future home.

Give my love to Mary and ask her to write me soon. Tell her I am rapidly becoming an enthusiastic henwoman.

The fact of the matter was that Mary's glowing accounts of her success with poultry had fired Edith's imagination. Her return to humdrum city life after the war had left her at loose ends, and she had been anxiously looking around for some avenue through which she could expend her very considerable stock of human energy. Mary had given her a lead. Why not fix up a little poultry plant at the Dower House? Her aunt, philosophically, fell in with the idea. Here was a chance to nip in the bud the danger of Edith entering some sort of impossible employment, which she had more than once threatened to do.

"Of course, my dear, if you must have a vocation, by all means raise poultry," she had said. "I am oldfashioned, I suppose, but in my younger days, girls were quite happy in their homes and had no hankering

after outside interests."

"You see, dear old goose," replied Edith, "we were all so dreadfully busy and independent during the war, that we now find it hard to settle down to the mid-Victorian domestic programme."

"Well, if it is mid-Victorian to be satisfied with a husband, home and children, I am afraid I must confess that I am a thorough mid-Victorian in my views."

"Far be it from your flighty niece to despise the husband, home and children," contended Edith demurely, "but until these delightful objects are thrust upon me,

I should rather like to have something useful to do

with part of my time."

"Very well, dear, by all means get your chickens and things, but take my advice and consult Hodge about it all," said Lady Selina, resignedly.

"Thank you ever so much, darling. I'll make a lot

of money out of my hens, you see if I don't."

And thus was the foundation laid for Edith's bucolic career. She would soon be in a position to meet Mary on common ground and discuss chicken lore learnedly.

In the meanwhile events were moving fast in Western Canada. The harvest was over and threshing and marketing out of the way. Dick had been fortunate. The grain had yielded satisfactorily and the price had been very fair. His letters to Edith were full of enthu-

siasm and bright hopes for the future.

"... I just knew you would bring me luck, you wonderful Edith! I am now clear of all obligations to the bank and have paid back part of my advances from the Soldiers' Settlement Board. Now, darling, have pity on my lonely state and have the matter out with Lady Selina once and for all... If you don't come soon I shall have to run over and kidnap you! I am beginning to think that something drastic will have to be done if we are ever going to get married...

"I told the Mater of our engagement and she promptly wept on my shoulder. . . . I am sure you will always love her, Edith. She is altogether the most perfect mother that any man could have and she will welcome you here with joy. . . Aunt Selina is getting on my nerves. I always liked the old lady as a boy, but why can't she be reasonable? I almost think she might be if only you would confide in her and make her understand that our future happiness is at stake. . ."

Edith found herself on the horns of an unpleasant dilemma. She clearly perceived the unfairness of keeping Dick waiting indefinitely, but she naturally



shrank from inflicting on her aunt a blow which she instinctively felt would prove devastating in a high degree. She had vaguely waited for something to turn up, which might have somewhat ameliorated the disappointment, but nothing seemed to come to her relief. She made up her mind to seek an opportunity to introduce the subject.

"Edith, do you realize that the years are slipping by and that you are now almost twenty-three?" asked

Lady Rokeby some days afterwards.

"Yes, dear, I do feel terribly ancient; but what am I going to do about it?" demanded Edith innocently.

"Don't be flippant, darling. You know perfectly

well what I mean," replied Lady Selina.

Edith felt that her opportunity had come. It must be now or never.

"I suppose you are alluding to my disgraceful state.

of widowhood," suggested Edith.

"You have been a sad disappointment to me, dear. God knows I have done my best to give you your chance, but it seems to me that you have failed to do your

part," she contended.

"I am afraid I have, dear Aunt Selina. No one could be quite as perfect a matchmaker as you are. But I simply can't marry anyone without actually loving him. I am built that contrary way, I expect," she added with an apologetic little smile.

"Of course, Edith, I can't very well drag you to the altar," said Lady Rokeby, disconsolately. "I certainly never realized that morbid sentimentality was so very

highly developed in you."

"Oh, I am just about as sentimental as the average girl, dear, no more and no less, I hope. But really and truly, don't you think one should feel very sure of one's self before marrying even the most eligible man?"

"I don't think men in our station of life would

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develop into wife-beaters or Bluebeards," came the

reply with some asperity.

"Possibly not, darling, but one has to live with one's husband and if married people are not very congenial and really love one another, I should think that your mid-Victorian domestic bliss might, to say the least, be somewhat problematical," said Edith, "and I do love peace."

"I have always entertained the suspicion that young Anstruther had a very weak spot for you, Edith," observed Lady Selina, craftily. "Surely you could not contemplate anything quite so fantastic as to marry

him?"

Edith was now face to face with her problem. It was ruthlessly thrust upon her.

"Why not, dear?" she asked evenly.

"Edith, I sometimes feel that I want to shake you. How can you ask such a ridiculous question?"

"I really don't see why such a fate would be so very dreadful if we really loved each other. He is now in very comfortable circumstances, I believe, and the family seems to be quite happy in Canada," replied Edith innocently, but now fully determined to have it out.

"Edith, dear, hand me the smelling salts, My head

aches most distressingly."

The wily old lady was not to be caught napping. She needed time to think about this. So that was how the matter stood! All her years of striving and all her carefully laid plans were apparently to come to naught, because of a silly infatuation for an utterly impossible youngster. Lady Rokeby's worst fears had actually been realized! Edith was about to ruin her life by throwing herself away on an impecunious colonial farmer. While these uncharitable thoughts were racing through the old lady's mind, Edith was industriously bything her



forehead with Eau de Cologne and whispering soothing words in her ear.

And thus ended the controversy. At any rate, thought Edith, the subject had now been brought out into clear daylight. She would leave Aunt Selina time to think it over and, diplomatically, reopen it at the very first favourable opportunity. When she learned how well Dick was doing and realized that they loved each other so devotedly, she would gracefully withdraw her opposition. Edith would patiently bide her time.

Lady Selina rose majestically and went upstairs to the kindly seclusion of her bedroom. Decidedly, this predicament needed most careful consideration. course the Anstruther family was not objectionable from a social point of view. They were good old stock. But they had never taken any position and were notoriously impoverished. What could the girl be thinking about, to harbour any idea of marrying Dick? It was preposterons.

She flattered herself that she still exercised some influence over her niece, who probably might not deliberately ignore her wishes in a matter of that sort. Well, she would not precipitate an open breach by acting arbitrarily. She would, in the meanwhile, avoid the subject entirely. Time might come to her aid and means must be found at all hazards to end this absurd entanglement. She would be of good cheer and lavish

all her love on this misguided niece of hers.

Edith at once proceeded to apprise Dick of the impending crisis. She wrote him a long letter, setting forth all the details of her discussion with Lady Selina. ". . . the dear, old thing seemed to take the matter quietly enough. In a day or two she will reopen the subject and I will then tell her all about you and of your wonderful success on the farm," she wrote. ". . . I feel tremendously elated over my bold move. I never honestly thought I should have had the courage



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to tell her of my hopes. Oh, darling Dick, I wish I was with you this very minute. . . . why can't the older generation leave us alone to arrange our love affairs as we please? We have to live our own lives, and I honestly doubt whether our seniors are a bit wiser than we are in such matters. . . "

Edith mailed her letter surreptitiously and derived comfort from the thought that she had actually taken the first step to disclose her dark, oppressive secret to her aunt. There was no turning back now. When her aunt reverted to the matter, she would tell her in unmistakable terms that she meant to marry Dick and once it was understood that all opposition would be in vain, Aunt Selina would gracefully capitulate.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

SHE MAIL had arrived and Mary was leisurely sorting it out on the dinner table. She handed her father a letter, which, after lighting his pipe and comfortably seating himself in an easy chair, he leisurely opened. He read the letter and re-read it. "How very extraordinary," he remarked.

"What is it, dear?" asked Mrs. Anstruther. Mary

looked interested.

"It is a letter from my old friend Houghton about your precious Aleck, Mary," he replied. "Most remarkable."

"Supposing you tell us what strikes you as so very remarkable," said Mary. "Of course, I will retire if there is anything in it I ought not to hear," she added hastily.

"No, darling, I don't think there is," replied the Sage. "But in all my experience I never heard of

anything so absolutely extraordinary."

"For Heaven's sake, father, don't keep us on pins and needles like this. I am just dying to hear what he has to say," ejaculated Mary impatiently.

"Very well. I will read it." Mary and her mother

sat down expectantly. My dear Anstruther.

Your letter came at a most opportune time, as I shall explain later on. To answer your question first, let me say that I do not know of any reason why your daughter should not marry the young scoundrel. It is, however, only fair to advise you that he involved himself in something of a scandal before he left England. I have no doubt he has already told you all about it.

Shortly after he called upon me in London, before returning to Canada, I received a bulky letter addressed to him in my care. As I had been named as his next of kin,

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the War Office thought that my address might find him. I kept the letter for some time, but not hearing from him decided to open it. It proved to be a document containing a deposition by a man lying in a French hospital, signed by the padre and a nurse, apparently establishing his innocence of the charges brought against him in connection with that unfortunate race.

Needless to say I took immediate steps to bring the matter to the attention of the proper authorities and I am pleased to say that, much to the gratification of his family

and friends, he now stands entirely exonerated.

He made a bit of a fool of himself some years ago, but that is now ancient history. Beyond this I know absolutely nothing to his discredit. I saw him once during the war and took a great fancy to him. Your country has evi-

dentimade a man of him.

Until your letter, providentially, reached me, we had moved heaven and earth to ascertain his whereabouts. The young beggar is most infernally careless about writing. In fact, no one had the least notion of where he was. The fact of the matter is that he is wanted at home in the worst way. His aunt, the Dowager Lady Carteret, some time ago asked me to assist her in locating him. The last year of the war, her two eldest sons were killed and the title came to the third boy, who was badly gassed and has now contracted T.B. There seems to be no hope whatever for his recovery, she tells me, and with his death, which may now occur at any moment, Aleck would succeed.

It is not a large estate that he will come into, but it has been efficiently kept up. The war took cruel toll from our old families. Please get into immediate touch with Aleck and tell him to write Lady Carteret at once. He ought to come home as the present baron is naturally most anxious to see him and is, I believe, reconciled to his

hard fate.

I have reassured them completely, I think, as to Aleck's fitness to discharge his future responsibilities. Naturally



they were not prepossessed in his favour, having in mind\_ the boy's early reputation. I enclose a letter which kindly place in his hands at once. With best regards to yourself and Mrs. Anstruther and congratulations to your daughter, etc., etc."

A letter was enclosed addressed to: Alexander Osmond-Scott, Esq., Mary looked bewildered. Mrs. Anstruther gazed, thoughtfully, out of the window and the Sage placed the letter on his desk and mechanically

relighted his pipe.

"Well, Lady Carteret," he said, "what do you think

about all this?"

"I don't see any Lady Carteret around here, Dad, so it is difficult to say just what she might think. However, I think it is a perfect nuisance," replied Mary.

"Why so, dear?" demanded Mrs. Anstruther.

"It must strike you, mother, that this development in Aleck's affairs changes the situation completely," observed Mary.

"Just what do you mean, darling. You cannot suppose that Aleck will not want to marry you now?"

she asked hesitatingly.

"No, but perhaps I may not want to marry him, mother. My mind is all in a muddle," Mary added, "and I think I shall go and lie down for a little while."

Mary went to her bedroom. She wanted to be alone with her problem. To marry Aleck, the struggling farmer, was one thing. To marry Aleck, future Baron Carteret, was quite another. She knew that he had nothing and that the estate would probably yield a very nominal income. It might eyen prove a burden if he attempted to fulfil all the time-honoured responsibilities of the land-owner, which he would doubtless desire to do. He certainly could not do it married to her.

The usual course in such cases was, she knew, to marry wealth. There were any number of attractive girls, with oceans of money, who could easily be persuaded to marry an impecunious peer of good reputation. There was absolutely no other course for Aleck to pursue. He could not now fairly follow his own inclination in his matrimonial affairs.

She felt certain that Aleck would never dream of voluntarily releasing her. He must be brought to see his duty and her father must help her to make it clear The first step would be for her to definitely end their provisional engagement and thus give him a free hand to meet the new situation.

Mary sat down at her writing table, gazed for a moment pensively at a very nice photo of Aleck, and

then proceeded briskly with her unpleasant task.

"My dear Aleck," she wrote. "Father has read to me the letter he has just received from your uncle. You realize, of course, that a new problem is now created for us. I have thought it over, backwards and forwards, and conclude that our engagement is now out of the question and must be ended, if indeed it ever properly began. . . .

"You cannot fail to see that you are not now quite a free agent to marry whom you please. You have no fortune of your own and must seek a wife who has. There would be nothing callous or discreditable in any such expedient on your part. Indeed, quite the reverse,

it is simply your plain duty.

"It is not easy to write this letter, Aleck dear, and you must not make it harder for me than you can My mind is quite made up and it will be useless for you to endeavour to change my determination. . . . You are going to England soon and it will be much wiser for us not to meet again, and I am going to ask you not to try to see me. So this is good-bye. God bless you and protect you. . . ."

Mary ceased writing and wearily put down her pen. Life was full of complications, but this had been totally unexpected. She realized that she loved Aleck with a



much deeper affection than she had been conscious of. He had hitherto appeared to her as a social inferior, but her love had bridged this seeming barrier. Their positions were now reversed, but she entertained small doubt that his affection would prove equally strong. Any such Quixotic tendency would, however, have to be firmly resisted. He was no longer his own master in matrimonial affairs. Every decent instinct in him would, of course, revolt against breaking off their engagement, so the sole onus must rest on her and she would rise to the stern occasion.

Mary, womanlike, felt some comfort in her impending sacrifice and went downstairs with the unsealed letter in her hand. The Sage was in the library conversing in

low tones with Mrs. Anstruther.

"Daddy, dear, I have just written a letter to Aleck, part of which I want you both to hear before I mail it," she announced and, in a faltering voice, proceeded to read extracts from her letter.

Poor Mary. She was endeavouring to put on a brave front, but a subdued sob was audible now and again, during the recital of her spirited message of renunciation. Mrs. Anstruther listened with moist eyes and the Sage was diligently blowing his nose, surreptitiously wining away a stray tear.

titiously wiping away a stray tear.

"My dear child," he said, after a vain effort to completely control his emotions. "You could not

possibly do otherwise."

Mrs. Anstruther could not quite trust herself to speak. She drew Mary down on her lap and kissed her passionately. Mary, the apple of her eye, had been wounded and her mother-heart knew that there was nothing more to be said on the painful subject.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

LECK was in Calgary endeavouring to get his business with the Soldiers' Settlement Board completed preparatory to purchasing the farm he had in view, when he received the fateful letters. He read them and re-read them several times. And then he swore. He used the most shocking profanity. It is recorded with deep regret that Aleck had a habit of giving vent to his feelings in strong language. But however much we deplore this fact, it must be admitted that there were extenuating circumstances on this particular occasion.

He rushed to the little writing desk in his hotel

bedroom and vigorously indited a missive to Mary.

"... You might as well understand that nothing on earth will induce me to release you from your promise. Even though my love for you would not make it utterly preposterous to make such a sacrifice, I should despise myself to the end of my days. ... I do not know the first thing about the financial position of the estate and care less. I shall go ahead with my farming venture on the creek as if nothing had happened and there we will live if our income will not enable us to remain in England.

"As to marrying for money, wild horses could not drag me into any such sordid relations. Darling Mary, I love you and you only. If you will not marry me, I swear I will remain single. My uncle urges me to go across to England at once, as my cousin is failing rapidly and wishes me to come over, so I shall obey you to the

extent of not seeing you for the present.

"I am leaving for the East to-night and will take the first boat I can get. As soon as I reach England I shall go into matters there and let you know exactly what the situation is. But understand clearly that



your happiness and my happiness come first in any event. In the meanwhile, dearest Mary, get ready for the wedding. You cannot get rid of me. . . ."

Mary wept and Mary smiled when she received Aleck's forceful letter. He had given her his English address and had commanded her, under pain of his deepest displeasure, to write him at once and tell him that no matter what happened, nothing could be allowed to wreck their future happiness.

"Dearest Aleck," she commenced and then paused, sticking the end of the penholder into her very attractive little mouth. It was difficult to know just what to say. "I received your letter," she continued. Of course, she obviously had. She again paused and meditated. Finally she made a determined attack upon the problem and succeeded.

did. But I must be the judge of what is best to be done in your interest. Evidently you are not to be trusted in matters of that sort. . . I will agree not to marry any one of my other numerous admirers until I hear from you again in the hope that something may turn up which would enable us to marry without jeopardizing your career. . Until then we will be good friends and nothing more. . Father quite agrees with my point of view and so would you if you had any common sense. ."

Alas, Mary had put her finger on the sore spot. Aleck had absolutely no common sense whatever. He foolishly preferred the woman he loved to a sonorous title and an estate of doubtful value. We will not criticize him. Senseless people of that sort are not so numerous that we can afford to abuse them.

Mary, her letter to Aleck off her mind, jumped in the flivver and drove over to the Purdoms. She had rather neglected them lately. "Well, Mr. Purdom, how is everything?" she cried as she espied Billy in the doorway of the shack.

"Fine, Miss Mary. Could hardly be better. I have just received a cheque for my wheat and I am going to square up with you right off the bat." Billy was smiling broadly as Mary jumped out of the car and entered the kitchen living-room. He shoved a chair up to the stove. The weather was getting chilly.

"Jenny is out with her chickens, as usual. That woman never seems to get tired. At it from early morning to late night," complained Billy.

Mrs. Purdom had seen the car coming through the gate and guessed who her visitor was. She finished her work with dispatch and made a run for the house and Mary was soon clasped in her arms. The kettle was boiling and a cup of tea was soon produced. Even Billy had at last become partial to his afternoon tea.

Mary and Jenny were soon deeply immersed in poultry discussion and Billy looked on in silence. This was all Greek to him. Mary presently went out to see Mrs. Purdom's pullets and a new cockerel which she had received by express from an Eastern breeder lately. The birds were duly admired and Mary-reluctantly prepared to leave.

"When is the wedding coming off, dear?" asked Mrs. Purdom, knowingly, but observing the expression in Mary's face, instantly felt sorry that the words had been uttered. Jenny had not been informed of Mary's engagement, but had shrewdly drawn her own conclusions and Aleck, overflowing with happiness, had possibly not been over-cautious in his conversation with these staunch admirers of Mary.

"Never mind, dear, don't tell me anything," she added hastily. "I suppose your parents would not be pleased with the match."

Mary related to her astonished friend the good



fortune that had befallen Aleck and explained her own

scruples in the matter.

"Oh, my darling girl," exclaimed Mrs. Purdom, grasping both her hands. "Of course you are going to marry him. Why, Aleck just worships the ground you tread on. He'll never, never give you up for anyone If he did, he would hear from us. Just as if you were not good enough for the best in the land," she added defiantly.

"Everything may come out right in the end, dear Mrs. Purdom," said Mary, "but I could never marry Aleck feeling that I might prove an incumbrance to him. I know the Old Country better than you do, and I am sure I have acted wisely."

But Mrs. Purdom could not see it in that light, and neither could Billy for that matter when the story was afterwards related to him by Jenny. These good people could never be brought to understand that there could possibly be anyone or anything on earth more desirable than Mary Anstruther. And perhaps they were not far wrong.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

"Agrarian Movement." A "local" of the United Farmers of Alberta had been organized at Clearwater, of which Dick was soon recognized as the leading spirit. His enthusiastic support of the cause led to his unanimous election as secretary. It soon became evident to the membership that Dick had unusual capacity for executive and organizing work, and the presidency was naturally tendered to him at the next annual meeting and duly accepted. Dick, in fact, was fast becoming an outstanding figure in rural affairs and had been sent as a delegate to the Annual Convention of the "U.F.A.", representing his local.

The farmers of the entire West were girding their loins and whetting their swords in anticipation of the forthcoming political battles for the control of the various provincial legislatures. One or two successes in byelections had convinced them that all that was necessary to ride to victory was to stand together and vote as a class—which Canadian farmers had seldom done before.

The agrarian temper was becoming ugly. Falling prices for farm products and increasing costs of operation were influences rapidly getting in their deadly work. The Canadian farmer was in no mood to heed plausible explanations of these world-wide phenomena. There was abroad a wide-spread demand that reforms be made by way of legislation. It was, they contended, utterly useless to argue that the causes of the farmer's present distress were not amenable to correction in this simple and direct fashion. The superstition that new laws would prove effective remedies had taken a strong hold on their imagination. Experienced political war horses shrugged their shoulders impotently. They realized that it was merely the repetition of ancient political

history, which indicated that in times of stress the public invariably wreakes its vengeance on the men at the helm

—blindly and furiously.

Dick had been deeply distressed by the intemperate language that had lately characterized the meetings of his local. Level-headed, steady farmers, friends of his for years, seemed to have been completely carried off their feet. Resolutions of the most violently radical character were presented and unanimously carried. The farmer was apparently smarting under a sense of deep injustice and was eagerly looking around for victims. Here was an opportunity for revenge. The old political parties had brought them to this. Now they would elect men from their own ranks to put the house in order. When they got through with the old system there would be no trace left of the crooked, grafting old

party organizations on the prairies!

Then came the drafting of the new party's platform, built largely on the foundation of the thousands of radical resolutions passed from time to time by local organizations. In spite of the alleged failure and mismanagement of the State, to which was attributed the distress under which agriculture was now groaning, there was a curious—almost pathetic—confidence displayed in the ability of the same State to right all their wrongs. The Government was called upon to undertake every sort of function. It was to own and operate mines, It was to enter railways and other public services. the commercial field and market the grain. The farmers of the Western Provinces had themselves for years operated a magnificent grain-handling organization with representation at almost every marketing point, in which millions had been invested. In these they They must be had apparently also lost confidence. scrapped with the rest of the old order of things.

One winter evening, after he had been in Clearwater presiding at an unusually stormy meeting, where he had

exercised commendable self-restraint in endeavouring to keep order during an acrimonious debate on some highly controversial issue, Dick was discussing this curious manifestation in human nature in the mass with the Sage.

"I simply cannot account for the temper of our fellows since we have decided to enter the political

field," he observed.

"I really don't see anything so very extraordinary in it at all. Dick. You must not overlook the fact that the farmer is at present the victim of a profound economic maladiustment. The war almost completely disjointed the whole social and economic machinery of Organized labour saw its opportunity to the world. right the wrongs of many years' standing, and, as usual, went too far in its demands. The farmer, on the other hand, is powerless to impose his own views as to the value of his services to the world. His is the most highly competitive vocation on earth. Consequently, he is being ground between the upper mill stone of high commodity and production costs and the nether millstone of falling prices, due to the general impoverishment of his customers the world over. cannot see any mystery in the situation at all."

"You certainly put the matter very clearly, Governor, and, of course, I can readily see what has led to the farmers' present unfortunate predicament. But your facts do not satisfactorily explain why this radical wave is sweeping through our ranks. I must confess

it worries me tremendously."

"Oh that," replied the Sage calmly. "That is merely a problem in human nature. It appears to me to be a perfectly healthy manifestation of a deep-rooted determination to correct palpable injustice, coupled with very obvious political inexperience and an abyssmal ignorance of economics. Then you must also make some allowance for the effects of the recent devastating war and its

influence on the minds of men. We have nearly all been injured by it in some spectacular manner and, of course, no sane person ever wanted a war. Consequently, deep down in everybody's heart, there is a growing distrust in the established order of things, which is, comparatively, easily fanned into flame."

"Then you regard the whole agrarian movement as being of a merely temporary character? You think it will die a natural death as soon as the present economic crisis has passed?" demanded Dick.

"Not necessarily," replied the Sage. "Class consciousness is now strongly in evidence amongst farmers and is not likely to abate. Canada is overwhelmingly agricultural and the West almost entirely so, and it seems inevitable to me that a distinct agrarian party should become a factor in the politics of the country. In England we have the House of Lord's championing the cause of the land owner and in other countries agrarian parties function successfully. I think that the political pretentions of the farmer here is a perfectly normal development and should be regarded as such."

"If that is the case, the present radical tendencies of our membership would seem to be a pretty dangerous manifestation," contended Dick.

"This is a new country, my boy, and the majority of your farmers have not yet sensed their privileges and their responsibilities as land owners. The mere fact that some of your leaders are endeavouring to make common cause with organized labour for the jourpose of forming 'farmer-labour' groups, demonstrates how completely they misconceive the fundamental grievances of agriculture, which are almost solely due to the demands of urban labour the world over for a standard of life, in terms of higher wages and shorter hours, away beyond anything the farmer can hope to enjoy, and for which agriculture now has to pay in higher operating

costs out of the dwindling returns received for the

products of the soil."

"All that is perfectly true, Dad, but it only seems to me to aggravate the case. If our whole movement is based on fundamental misconceptions, where is it going to land us?"

"Have no fear on that score, Dick. The farmer willfind himself in the end. The law of evolution is always at work and you may safely rest assured that as time goes on, he will discard all the political and economic nostrums that now look so attractive to him. You and other leaders of moderate agrarian opinion, must be patient until the present acute attack, of political

infantile frenzy has run its course."

"I sincerely hope you are correct in your diagnosis, Dad. It simply makes me ill to listen to some of our advanced thinkers at the provincial conventions," replied Dick despondently. "By the way, it was suggested at our meeting to day that I should contest this constituency at the next election. I can easily get the nomination and that will just about be tantamount to my election. What do you think about it?"

"I think you should certainly accept. You apparently enjoy the confidence of the farmers in this district, and it is your duty to serve them to the best of your

ability."

"To tell you the truth I should rather like to have a taste of public life out here, and I really think that I could serve their interests as well as anyone else in the constituency," replied Dick, with becoming modesty.

"There is no doubt in my mind on that point. If you refuse, they will probably nominate some red-hot radical, and you know, Dick, in this life we are responsible for all the evil we have it within our power to prevent."

"Of course, Governor, Linad no intention of deciding this question without first discussing it with you. We are in business together, you know, and I should not

feel free to act in a matter of this sort without your full concurrence. I should necessarily have to be away from here at times, but Wesley is quite able to carry on alone for a limited time. So if you are agreeable, I shall accept the nomination if it is tendered to me."

"By all means, Dick," agreed the Sage. "It would be no small privilege for a young chap like you to serve in the legislature of your province. Such an opportunity wouldn't have come your way at home, would it?"

"No, sir, in our circumstances, such a thing would have been impossible almost," replied Dicks smilingly. Of course he had not forgotten Edith nor Aunt Selina. A seat in the legislature would have its weight with the latter, who had always been an inveterate worshipper of men in the public eye. This was a consideration not to be lightly disregarded. Dick was already beginning to imbibe the rudiments of practical politics!

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

CINCE Aleck left for England, Mary had heard from him regularly. She had made it very clear in the beginning of their correspondence, that entirely new relations had been established between them-a situation which Aleck did not submit to without vigourous pro-But submit he finally did after Mary had issued a very pointed ultimatum. He described the estate of which he was now the nearest heir and where he had spent many of his boyhood holidays. His father had been born there and had instilled in his young son a deep love for this cradle of their race. Aleck, in his own way, was proud of the old place and all the traditions that centered around it. His reception had left nothing to be desired. Lady Carteret and her stricken son had been kindness itself. Aleck, of course, felt that he was under observation and was not entirely at ease. The estate agent had been instructed to go into all the details of the property with him and had been most conscientious in fulfilling his duty.

It was not a very rosy prospect financially, Aleck had to admit to himself. The factor seemed a pretty competent individual and Aleck opened his heart to him freely. He spent most of his time with Harry Frewen.

"Do you know, Frewen," he said one evening when they were chatting together at the latter's quarters, "I love the old place as much as anyone of our people, but I would infinitely sooner be here as a visitor than as owner pro tem, when that time comes, as come, I suppose, it will."

"So I would gather," hazarded Harry.
"It is, in fact, going to play the devil with my whole career. I was just on the point of getting married—I tell you this in strict confidence—when the blow fell. When the young lady in question understood the situ-

ation, she promptly turned me down and I have stayed turned down ever since."

"If I may ask the question, Mr. Scott, what was the

burden of her objections?"

"She told me that it was my bounden duty to marry a girl with money. In other words, that it was more important should keep up this bally old place than that we two should have our share of happiness."

"An uncommonly fine type of young lady that, I

should judge," observed Frewen judicially.

"Of course one can't help admiring her spunk; she absolutely refused to budge an inch!" confessed Aleck with ill-concealed disgust.

"Well, Mr. Scott, I should not despair. You can

never tell what may happen."

Aleck took whatever comfort he could from Frewen's friendly optimism, but he was in a very unhappy frame of mind when he dined with Lady Carteret that evening. She naturally ascribed his downcast mental condition to anxiety over the dying man and felt more than kindly disposed towards her guest.

Later in the evening Lady Carteret was sitting at her son's bedside. He was evidently sinking fast, his breathing cames rapidly and with apparent effort. The hopeful mental attitude, characteristic of the disease he was suffering from, had left him. He knew he was dying and had become reconciled to his fate. He spoke

with some difficulty.

"Mother dear, as you know I am in no position to form any judgment in regard to my cousin. I have chatted with him as often as I have been able to, but his character and habits remain absolutely a closed book to me."

"I am rather favourably impressed with Aleck, but what is more to the point, Frewen speaks very highly of him. He has been with him a great deal," replied

Lady Carteret.

Lord Carteret looked pleased. Even while face to face with the grim reaper, the future of the property, which had been in the possession of his family for centuries, was a problem not to be dismissed lightly.

"I would love to feel assured that his gambling habit is definitely a thing of the past; that he can, in fact, be absolutely trusted to take good care of the old place," the sick man whispered. "I have, as you know, left everything to you that was mine to leave, Mater, and, of course, if Aleck is to be depended upon and means to do his duty here, it would be shabby to leave him with the bare place. You will see that he gets sufficient income to carry on in some degree of comfort, won't you, dear?"

"Don't distress yourself about that, darling. Try

and get some rest."

"I would like to see him for a few minutes to-night, Mater. I don't feel very much like sleeping."

"I'll see if I can find him, dear," replied Lady-Car-

teret, looking anxiously at her son.

Aleck was in his room in the act of disrobing when his aunt requested his presence in the sick room. He put on his dressing gown and immediately went down to his cousin. Aleck had been most considerate and sympathetic with the sick man since he arrived and a sort of friendship had developed between them. Aleck had wanted to return to Canada soon after his arrival in England, but his cousin had earnestly begged him to remain. This he had readily agreed to do.

"Aleck, old man," he said, "the doctor told me this morning that my time is almost here." A coughing spell brought the nurse to his side. After he had regained his breath, he proceeded, with some effort, "the old Governor and we boys have been pretty good to the old place. . . . Of course I don't expect you to feel quite the same way about it: nevertheless, your

father and his father were born here and you can't be

indifferent to all it stands for."

"My dear fellow, of course I love it and always have loved every stick and stone here. If it is my fate to inherit it, I should be less than human if I did not discharge my responsibility to the very letter, or rather to the best of my ability. I can't very well promise any more, and I should certainly not do any less, you can depend on that."

"I feel tremendously relieved, Aleck. We have seen so little of you since you were a boy that I often think we hardly know you at all." Lord Carteret paused and Aleck counselled him not to overtire himself and suggested seeing him again in the morning. He shook his head sadly. "No, old chap, whatever I have to say to you had better be said soon . . . any time now I may not be able to say it," he added with a wan smile. "You will be kind to the old people who have served us for years and who are no longer able to work, won't you, Aleck?"

"Dear old fellow, God knows I regret from the bottom of my heart the chain of terrible events that is responsible for my presence here. My sorrow is much deeper than you will ever be able to understand. I promise you solemnly that I will work my fingers to the bone sooner than permit any human being to suffer by reason of my taking your place, if, indeed,

it is decreed that I shall."

"You may safely take for granted that it is, Aleck. Give me your hand, old man." Lord Carteret pressed it weakly. "Thank you, Aleck. . . I feel It is a great certain that I can depend upon you. burden off my mind. . . Now, good night. . . . Run away to bed and ask the nurse to send the Mater to me, as you pass." He smiled gratefully at Aleck as he left the room.

Aleck was beginning to feel the full weight of his

responsibilities. Mary, after all, had appraised the situation much more correctly than he had. What an infernal shame neither of them had money!

Early the next morning Aleck was awakened out of a sound sleep by a loud knock at his door. He got out of

bed quickly.

"Mr. Scott, will you be good enough to come downstairs," said the nurse. "Lord Carteret has taken a bad turn and, I am afraid, it is the beginning of the end. We have sent for the doctor."

Aleck quickly dressed and joined Lady Carteret, who had just come from her son's bedside. She was

pale and had evidently been weeping.

"Dear Aunt Caroline, it may not be as bad as you think. As long as there is life there is hope, you know."

"I am afraid it is the end, Aleck. He must be suffering terribly and one almost wishes that it may not be prolonged. Poor boy," she added, "he was so full of hope and so anxious to get well. . . . Oh, God, I have had so much sorrow the last few years that I often wonder how I have been able to endure it all." Lady Carteret utterly broke down and gave vent to her emotions in a burst of sobs and tears. Aleck patted her limp hand and vainly strove to soothe her overwhelming grief.

The doctor arrived and, after a hurried consultation with the nurse, proceeded to the sick-room. Lady Carteret, with an effort, pulled herself together and presently joined him there. Aleck remained outside the door, deeply affected by the solemnity of the occasion.

Oblivious to the passage of time, Aleck continued his vigil for nearly an hour. The door opened and Lady Carteret was gently led out by the nurse, her face buried in her handkerchief. Aleck knew that all was over. The last of her three bonnie lads had fallen a victim to the war!

The funeral was an impressive one and there was scarcely a dry eye amongst those who followed the body to its last resting place. The family had always been universally beloved in the county, and the deepest sympathy was extended to the sorrowing mother.

"Aleck," said Lady Carteret, some days after the funeral, "I suppose you and I must have a business talk."
"Please don't worry over estate matters, Aunt Caroline. There can be nothing of sufficient importance to trouble you about for the moment." replied Aleck.

"Everything is going on as usual."

"Nevertheless, my boy, we might as well arrive at an understanding as to the future. Your cousin, before he died, charged me with certain responsibilities, which I much prefer to discuss with you now."

Aleck courteously seated himself near his aunt,

prepared to listen with attention.

"As you are aware, we are not wealthy people and, with the heavy taxation imposed, the estate itself is little better than self-supporting. Your cousin desired me to pay the inheritance duties and also to make you a suitable allowance. He was most anxious it should be made possible for you to keep the old place up decently, which, I feel sure, will be your own inclination."

"I couldn't think of depriving you of part of your limited income, Aunt Caroline. I am, of course, tremendously grateful to you all the same," replied Aleck

quickly.

"My wants are simple, Aleck, and I shall not very seriously miss fifteen hundred a year, which is the amount my dear son suggested, Besides, it was one of his last

wishes, which must be respected."

Aleck, deeply touched by Lady Carteret's generosity, gratefully acquiesced in the proposal. This would effectually overcome Mary's objections! He felt, however, on second thought, that it was his duty to frankly acquaint his aunt with his matrimonial inclinations.

"I have a confession to make, Aunt Caroline, which may tempt you to change your mind about providing

for my future," he said hesitatingly.

"I hope—indeed, I am certain—Aleck, that there could be nothing so discreditable in any confession of yours that it would induce me to alter my mind in this matter," replied Lady Carteret, not without a shade of anxiety.

"It is kind of you to say so, Aunt Caroline. While there is nothing discreditable, yet there may be an

element of disappointment in my tale."

"I am all attention."

"The fact of the matter is, that I was on the point of getting married when I received your summons," blurted out Aleck.

"Oh, I do hope you will carefully consider such an enormously important step," interrupted Lady Carteret. "You will never forget, my boy, that your wife must

now take my place."

"Unfortunately for me, I am able to reassure you completely, dear. Miss Anstruther promptly broke off our engagement when your letter reached me in Canada and magnanimously advised me to seek a mate with a comfortable fortune, so that I might be able to do my full duty here. We do love each other so dearly, Aunt Caroline," continued Aleck, earnestly and appealingly. "You will now understand more clearly how distressed I am over everything that has happened here."

I am over everything that has happened here."
"She certainly that be a young lady with a prodigious amount of character," suggested Lady Carteret,

with hesitation and evident astonishment

"Aunt Caroline, she is simply incomparable," he exclaimed. "She is gentle and refined and oh, so very sensible and dependable and, of course," he added with unmistakable emphasis, "she is absolutely the most beautiful thing I ever saw, and I just feel I must marry her somehow."



Lady Carteret had naturally been startled over Aleck's bald announcement of his matrimonial desires. At first she had disturbing visions of a scheming milk-maid or worse, but the supplementary information had rather prepossessed her in favour of the unwilling object of Aleck's affection. Evidently, this young woman was neither a title- nor a fortune-hunter. And then he obviously wanted her. Would it be wise to raise serious obstacles?

"Well, dear, you must certainly marry some time or other and it does seem a pity that such a paragon should be beyond your reach," replied Lady Carteret, with a

faint suggestion of a smile.

"I won't beat about the bush any longer, Aunt Caroline. The situation is just this," ejaculated Aleck. "Mary has declined to marry me feeling that such a union would stand in the way of my fulfilling my responsibilities here. With the allowance you so considerately offered me, that objection is removed. But, accepting your generosity, I cannot, of course, feel free to marry without your full approval," he concluded desperately.

"And you have reason to suppose that the young lady would not likely meet with my approval," de-

manded Lady Carteret nervously.

"Aunt Caroline, upon my word of honour, I cannot imagine anyone better fitted by breeding, education and temperament to take her place here as my wife, nor any one you would more thoroughly approve of," said Aleck with conviction.

"Very well, then, what are we arguing about?"

'I feel positive she would not marry me unless she had your assurance of a welcome and also that no sacrifice would be involved so far as my future is concerned," suggested the wily Aleck. He was going to have an argument this time that would clinch the subject!

my welcome would not be a matter of any particular

importance . .

"Aunt Caroline, this is your home as long as you are alive and want to use it and Mary would never be happy here unless she was certain of your welcome and felt that she, in return, could be a devoted daughter to you," interrupted Aleck earnestly.

"It is very considerate of you, dear, to feel that way. Of course, I will write your Mary and plead your

case."

Aleck gratefully implanted a kiss on his aunt's cheeks. "You'll do so soon, Aunt Caroline, won't you?"

"I shall do so at once," replied Lady Carteret, prompt-

ly proceeding to her desk.

My dear Miss Anstruther, she wrote, Aleck has just explained to me your very commendable views in respect to his proposal of marriage. Needless to say, I deeply appreciate, and very much approve, the motive behind your self-sacrificing attitude. I think, however, that your objections will be completely removed when I tell you that, in obedience to the expressed wish of my late son, I am at once arranging an annual allowance in Aleck's favour sufficient, in conjunction with the income from the estate, to cover all necessary requirements.

At Aleck's special request I wish to add that I consider he is a very lucky man, indeed, to have gained the affections of a young lady with such evident high principles as appear to have governed your attitude in this matter. From what I now judge of your character, and from what Aleck tells me, I cannot imagine any reason why your speedy marriage should not meet with my entire appro-

bation.

I am getting to be an old lady and have lived here the better part of my life. I have never had a daughter and my dear sons have now all been taken from me, in the very flower of their youth. Aleck insists that I shall still make the old place my home and, I freely confess, that I should

dearly love to end my weary days here. I sincerely hope that you may see eye to eye with him in his generous proposal and that you and I may become before long, deoted friends.

Aleck had left the room while Lady Carteret was busy with her letter. He went to the garage, jumped into a car and drove furiously to the telegraph office and excitedly dispatched the following cablegram to Mary.

LADY CARTERET WIRING EXPLAINING COMPLETE REMOVAL YOUR OBJECTIONS. LEAVING FOR CANADA FIRST BOAT. PREPARE FOR WEDDING:

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

HE MEETING of representatives from southern constituencies elected from the various locals was to be staged in Calgary. Dick was one of the delegates from Clearwater and motored into the city with the other two representatives from his district, one of whom was Billy Purdom, also an enthusiastic U.F.A. man.

"I guess there will be fireworks at the convention

this time," ventured Billy.

"I shouldn't be surprised," replied Dick. "You boys want me to contest our constituency, but I shall probably put my foot in it before we get through with this function at Calgary. I feel just a shade cantankerous and may yield to the temptation to say what I think."

"We know you too well at home, Dick, to be prejudiced against you on account of anything you may say or do there. I know how you feel about our noisy element and most of us agree with you. But I wouldn't worry my head about all the hot air speeches at these meetings."

The socialistic or ultra-radical element in the organization, though blatant, was generally in the minor-

ity when it came to voting.

The convention opened the next morning, bright and early, as became a farmers' gathering. The provincial leader was unanimously elected to the chair, and forthwith outlined the purposes for which they had been called together. The political horizon was clouded, he intimated. The farmer had little direct representation in the legislature. A general provincial election was impending and it behooved them to organize and place candidates of their own in the field.

"Gentlemen," he exclaimed at the end of his perora-

tion, "we must seize the reins of government, not alone in the provincial but also in the Federal arena. We must end, once and for all, the carnival of graft and hypocrisy carried on in the shadow of the two old, corrupt political parties, aided and abetted by their gutter press. God grant us the power and the will to clean out the Aegean stable and to establish governments in this fair land of ours, by the people and for the people, whose smallest acts may bear the searching rays of clear daylight.

"Fellow citizens and brother farmers, the grasping predatory interests have us by the throat. Society is torn asunder through fierce, ruthless competition. Every man's hand is turned against his neighbour in the cruel fight for existence. But a new day is dawning with our movement. I see a vision of a reconstructed world, with production based on human needs rather than for sordid profit—a world where man's inhumanity to man has yielded place to concord and brotherly love!

"God grant that it may be the destiny of this clean, young political movement of ours-conceived and organized on as broad a foundation as the expansive prairies themselves—to lead us all into the Promised Land of a new and juster social and economic system. Each one of you now has his or her stern duty faithfully to do. Let us so perform our glorious task that gener-

ations to come may arise and call us blessed!"

The speaker paused, exhausted. He straightened his body, shook his snow-white mane and, before the fire of battle had died from his eyes, resumed his seat.

The meeting was now open for discussion.

A murmur of excitement ran, like wild-fire, through the assembly. "That's the ticket," muttered Dick's neighbour. Billy Purdom gazed at the leader with deep admiration. This man possessed the rare art of swaying multitudes. That he was sincere, almost to the point of fanaticism, no one could doubt for a moment.

Speaker after speaker paid tribute to the eloquence and sterling worth of the chairman. Dick rose in his place

and presently caught the eye of the chair.

"I have listened to the very excellent address from the chair with deep interest," he announced. Dick was becoming a frequent and fluent speaker and always had an attentive audience at farmers' meetings. "I cannot help being aware of the unfortunate position we farmers find ourselves in at the present time, with respect to markets for our live-stock and for most of our other products. Yet I cannot quite subscribe to all the far-reaching social theories our worthy chairman has so eloquently endorsed. I do not for a moment doubt his absolute sincerity in everything he has said and, it goes without saying, I have no quarrel whatever with a world reconstructed along improved lines.

"But I am one of those who repose abiding faith in the ability of Anglo-Saxon democracy to bring about such reforms as are feasible, and in the public interest, as fast as the individual is educated up to the higher citizenship, which necessarily involves a proper degree of appreciation of, and submission to, the sacrifices imposed upon the inhabitants of the ideal State. All this, I hope—indeed I feel convinced—will come in God's good time and, in the meanwhile, it is the bounden duty of every decent person to lend his influence towards hastening the arrival of that much-to-be-desired millenium.

"Knowing myself and my average fellow-citizen, as I think I do, I reluctantly conclude, however, that the day of the successful socialized state is far off indeed. We have an object lesson in Russia at this moment, where an attempt was made—in absolute good faith, I verily believe—to impose sweeping social reforms upon a vast population centuries before it was morally and intellectually ripe for them. Our citizens are better prepared in this country, I admit, but generations will

come and go before we will reach the high plane of self-sacrifice and tolerance which alone makes such a social system possible."

Dick paused and look around him critically. He had not struck a popular chord, that was very certain. Even the Clearwater delegates at his side did not look

entirely pleased.

"However, we are here primarily for the purpose of discussing sordid business," he resumed, "and my object in addressing you is to bring the meeting to focus its attention exclusively on the immediate problems before us, which are neither small nor unimportant." then proceeded to elaborate on questions of local organization and all the detail involved in a province-wide political campaign. He felt, instinctively, that he was fast being re-instated in the good graces of the meeting. Vigorous applause followed several of the telling points he made. When he finally sat down it was abundantly evident that he had somewhat reluctantly been forgiven for the "break" he had made in the early part of his speech. Dick clearly realized that no one could with impunity disagree with the eloquent and pragmatic chairman, who was idolized by the rank and file which came under his spell once or twice a year and promptly returned home loudly singing his praises.

Puring the lunch recess, Dick adjourned to a nearby restaurant with half a dozen other delegates. The chief topic of conversation was naturally the business of the morning session. He was gently chided by one of his companions for his outspoken criticism of the social

doctrines advanced by the leader.

"I am afraid I don't get you fellows' point of view at all," admitted Dick good naturedly. "The brother-hood of man idea is one I should never have the temerity to quarrel with."

"What are you driving at then?" asked his assailant.
"We have organized for mutual protection and



# The Fruits of the Earth

mutual benefit, as far as we are able, legally and constitutionally, to secure such protection and such benefits. Am I right?" he demanded.

"Agreed." was the ready response.

"Very well, then, what has all this social reform propaganda got to do with the objects of our organization, which are basically economic?"

"It is our duty to do everything in our power to help all classes of society if we obtain political control,"

replied his adversary.

"That is always the chief object of democracy, as I see it," contended Dick, now thoroughly aroused. "We should not, however, pretend that we farmers have any special monopoly on common, ordinary decency and humanity. What I particularly object to, however, is the emphasis placed on the social reform question, as if we were a Sunday School convention rather than a gathering of hard-headed farmers bent on improving their own business status."

"I agree with Dick," said Billy unexpectedly.

"I guess we all do," admitted another delegate sheepishly, "but the old man is nuts on up-lift and puts up a good line of talk and I don't see what particular harm it does. We need a little 'uplifting', I guess. Most of us have to struggle so darned hard, that we are apt to give little thought to loving our neighbour. It is a good thing to be reminded of it now and again."

"Well, I am in entire accord with that sentiment, old man," conceded Dick generously, "and I will try very hard to remember what you have said when our respected leader gets on my nerves again. At any rate, I have never questioned his motives, which are probably beyond reproach."

Lunch over, the delegates reassembled in the hall and spent the balance of the afternoon discussing the details of political orgnization work. A tentative plan was finally evolved, which received the endorsation of



the convention and to which Dick had, admittedly, made very important contributions.

Before leaving the hall, Dick had a moment's conversation with the leader, who warmly congratulated

him on his effective work.

"Anstruther," he said, "I hear the people in your district have some idea of nominating you for the local house. We want young men of vision to represent us. Of course, such affairs do not come within my province. Our organization is, as you are aware, built from the bottom up and the locals are absolutely supreme and independent in their choice of candidates, but I sincerely hope that you may see your way to accept the call should it come."

"Thank you very much for your kind opinion of me, Sir," Dick replied. "If I am nominated, I shall

certainly do my level best for the cause."

It was, after all, very decent of the old chap, thought Dick, as he took his departure. It was difficult to bear any animosity against a man of such charming personality. Dreamer and idealist, as he undoubtedly was, he had a large and enthusiastic following among the more impressionable adherents of the farmers' movement all through Canada. The desperate economic situation of agriculture at the time also made them peculiarly susceptible to the lure of the spectacular radical appeal.

Dick, while conscious of the many excellent personal qualities of his leader, was fully cognizant of the fact that he and his fantastic social reform hobbies, constituted a grave menace to a sound and practical development of the agrarian political movement in Canada. Many influential supporters shared his forebodings, but feared to give utterance to their apprehensions. The "old man" was a power to be reckoned with.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

LECK'S cable fairly took Mary's breath away. It was an entirely unexpected development. had already become reconciled to the inevitable. The realization that she had acted an unselfish—even an heroic—part had thrilled her not a little. A selfappointed martyr, Mary was beginning to revel in her martyrdom. What normal young women would not plunge herself into a veritable transport of morbid ecstacy under similar romantic circumstances? But, alas and alack! It was decreed that Mary was not, after all, to be a martyr, so why rebel against inexorable fate? Mary took the news philosophically, received the kisses and congratulations of the delighted family with such decorum as might be expected from a future peeress, and went about attending to her chickens and selling her eggs as if nothing extraordinary or romantic had happened.

When Lady Carteret's letter came she read it through and silently handed it to her mother and then they wept. The pathetic side of it struck them both irresistibly. Mary determined and mutely registered a solemn vow that she would devote such part of her life as was not claimed by Aleck to repaying this dear old soul for her generosity to them both. And it may safely be taken for granted that Lady Carteret was destined to bless the day she had accepted Mary on trust. Those of us who know Mary could, of course,

entertain no doubt on that score.

Aleck wired from Winnipeg the date of his arrival in Calgary and implored Mary to meet him with the flivver, as he simply could not wait for the afternoon train. No one could blame him particularly for that, and Mary was quite ready to exert herself to expedite his travelling arrangements. She had, of course, paid a visit to the Purdoms to apprise them of the happy termination of her little romance.



"Didn't I tell you so, Mary," said Mrs. Purdom, with joy reflected in her honest gray eyes. you are going to be a great lady, as you richly deserve to be, and you'll soon forget all about us folks in the wild and woolly west."

"Never as long as I am alive, dear Mrs. Purdom," replied Mary, earnestly. "If we are not too hard up, I am going to insist on a trip out here ever so often."
"Well, bless your heart, dear, and we'll love to see

you just as often as you can come."

And the two women chatted happily about the great good fortune that had come to Mary. Billy wanted to know when Aleck was coming, and they both had serious scruples as to whether it was proper to call him plain Aleck. Mary assured them that if they dared to call him Lord Carteret, he would be most terribly offended.

The day of Aleck's arrival, Mary was up with the Indeed, she probably had her breakfast long larks. before the larks did. At any rate, she started from home at 6 o'clock in the morning and made Calgary before 8 o'clock. She had ascertained by telephone before leaving that the train had accidently been delayed until She was nervously waiting on that convenient time. the station platform. It seemed hours before the whistle sounded in the distance and Mary's heart was beating violently as the train halted. Aleck was there! Of course, any one could have assured her that he would be. He had her in his arms in the twinkling of a moment and impressed fierce kisses upon her willing lips. The departing passengers smiled broadly, but neither Aleck nor Mary cared a button about that.

The long drive home was a never-to-be-forgotten The distance was not, by any means, covered as quickly as it had been earlier in the day, and it was perfectly marvellous how Mary contrived to properly guide the flivver with this impatient lover at her side. Accidents were, in fact, narrowly averted more than once. However, they reached the "castle" in time for the noon meal and the warm welcome Aleck received from the assembled family was worth while crossing

the ocean for, he solemnly declared.

It was not quite the same Aleck that had now returned to the settlement. The tragic death of his cousin and the new responsibility that had been so dramatically thrust upon him had evidently made a deep impression on his mind and somewhat changed his outlook upon life. It was noticed that he was more companionable and that his cynicism had completely vanished. During his brief stay he made friends with all and sundry. He was overflowing with happiness and firmly established himself in everyone's affections. He became keenly interested in Dick's political aspirations, and in his quiet convincing way helped his cause considerably amongst many of the more influential residents of Clearwater, which was the only doubtful part of the electoral district.

It was the evening before the wedding. Aleck had temporarily taken up his residence at the Clearwater hotel, and Mary was taking a lone walk along the She wanted to say good-by to each individual blade of grass on the farm. At least, that is how Mary felt. She had spent such very happy and pregnant years here and she actually dreaded the parting. She had never realized before how deeply attached she had become to this corner of the Great West. It was her hour of doubt and misgiving. Would she fit into her new life? Could new friends ever take the places of those sterling, great-hearted sons and daughters of toil she had learned to love and respect? And the prairies. God's beautiful, virgin out-of-doors! How she would miss it all! "Thy country shall be my country and thy people shall be my people." . . . She realized that it is woman's fate to submit and go where her husband leads her. She climbed the hill west of the house and saw the

whole Anstruther farm spread out before her, like a huge coloured map in the golden sunset. What a lovely sight it was! She took a long, last look at it all and

slowly made her way back to the house.

It had been decided that the wedding should take place in the little church at Clearwater. intuitively from the usual display in connection with such functions and, in deference to his wishes, the family had consented to a very quiet wedding. Everyone agreed that Mary looked charming in her simple travelling dress. The ceremony took place during the forenoon in the presence of the immediate friends of the family. The sun shone brightly and great bunches of prairie flowers adorned the simple altar of the little. bare. Anglican church, with its unpainted pineboard benches. It was a queer setting for the nuptial cermony of a peer of the realm, but Aleck was not conscious of anything incongruous in the surroundings. He had eyes for one person only, with whom he was presently united until death should part them.

The young couple took the early train for Calgary, proceeding East the same afternoon. The final parting between Mary and her mother was pathetic. Mrs. Anstruther bravely controlled her feelings until the last moment, when nature proved too strong for her. She clung to Mary tenaciously until the train was about to depart, when the Sage gently separated them. It was a trying ordeal. Dick comforted his mother as best he could on the way home, but everyone felt that the "castle" could never be quite the same without the

cheerful, vitalizing presence of Mary.

The bride and groom had finished an excellent dinner in the dining car of the "Trans-Canada Limited." They were standing on the back platform of the observation car in the gathering dusk, looking at the passing land-scape. He had his arm around her waist with the avowed purpose, however, of steadying her against the swaying

movements of the eagle-winged train. At least, so he intimated.

"Aleck, dear, I am so absolutely happy," whispered the new Lady Carteret, looking up at her husband with adoring eyes.

"Darling Mary, everything came out right in the end after all. didn't it?" he asked, giving her a gentle

little saueeze.

"It did indeed," replied Mary, snuggling closer to her lord and master. "My cup of happiness will be full to overflowing as soon as I hear that Mother is looking properly after those sweet little chicks of mine."

We may safely leave Aleck and Mary here and take it for granted that they reached the ancestral home in due course and faithfully discharged all the traditional duties and responsibilities of the luckless land owner in sorely-tried old England. A letter from Lady Carteret to Mrs. Anstruther, received some months afterwards, throws an interesting light on their new career. may readily suppose that this communication could not fail to fill Mrs. Anstruther's heart with unalloyed

happiness.

My dear Mrs. Anstruther, she wrote, I am delighted to learn that there is some chance of you and your husband coming across to England this fall to pay us a visit here. Needless to say. I look forward with pleasure to making the acquaintance of dear Mary's parents. I never cease to bless the day she became Aleck's wife. Had she been my very own daughter, she could not have more completely - captured my affection. She has been a great comfort to me in my sorrow. No one could have been more tactful and self-sacrificing than she has been. Our people simply worship her and in spite of the limited means at our disposal, she contrives to lighten the burden materially of the large number of widows and fatherless children this cruel war has left in its wake on the estate. Her sweet, sympathetic understanding and sound common-sense irresistibly



influence the lives of everyone she comes in personal contact with. God was good to me when, in His infinite wisdom, He brought these two young lives together. Aleck also is an outstanding success and exceedingly popular. He is, I believe, most active and helpful in our local affairs. I cannot tell you, dear Mrs. Anstruther, how inexpressibly thankful I am that this ray of sunlight has come to brighten up the grief-stricken, declining years of my life.

... Mary, of course, would never tell you these things herself so I thought I would write you...

Mrs. Anstruther read the precious missive over and over again and wept, joyfully, over the contents. The Sage even shed a silent tear as he looked over her shoulder at Lady Carteret's letter. It almost reconciled them to the loss that had evidently proven Lady Carteret's

gain.

But, however important love affairs may be, matters of a severely practical nature claimed the attention of the Anstruther family just then. The election campaign was on and Dick had, as anticipated, received the nomination. Wesley had largely been left to his own devices in running the farm work for some time, as Dick had been compelled to tour the constituency incessantly. Meetings were the order of the day and Dick had entered the fight full of vim and vigour. He was in the fray to win and had no intention of sparing himself.

#### -CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

IT WAS the night before the election and a great joint political rally was being staged in the Curling Rink in Clearwater, which had been tastefully decorated with flags for the occasion through the united efforts of sympathetic villagers. Dick and his opponent were to speak. Farmers came from near and far, and long before the meeting was scheduled to open, the large rink was filled to capacity. As Dick mounted the platform, he cast an appraising eye over the audience. His appearance was greeted with resounding applause. Evidently, his friends were in the majority. This was to be his great occasion. He had himself well in hand and was ready for the fray.

Dick's opponent, the sitting member, was to speak first, according to arrangement. The chairman called the meeting to order and briefly introduced him. He rose to his feet, moved deliberately to the front of the platform and commenced to address the gathering. He was plausible and Dick recognized, with some mis-

giving, that he was no mean adversary.

"I have commented on the political enthusiasm which now permeates the ranks of the organized farmers," he said. "We are all expected to believe that political action is going to cure all agricultural economic ills. It is going to give us better markets and prices for our products. One of these days we may even be asked to believe that it will stop the drouth. It is, in fact, going to bring about an agricultural millenium! All of which is, of course, the rankest kind of humbug. Personally, I am firmly and unalterably opposed to class government of any sort.

"The fact is that we have all had our heads turned by this steady flow of agrarian political oratory. We are forgetting the origin of the 'Farmers' Movement',



which aimed at co-operation and other economic action. We are forgetting the useful spade work done by the pioneers of this great movement years ago, the sturdy battles they fought with the Winnipeg Grain Exchange and the events leading up to the enactment of The Canada Grain Act. All these things were accomplished without any political wire-pulling. The Western farmer merely spoke through his organizations and, after a while, governments literally fell over each other to obtain his support by meeting his wishes. What more could a farmer government do than has already been done by the present government?"

"What about the question of transportation?" asked

some one in the audience.

"My friends, the farmers' political platform is discreetly silent on this great problem. The present government, on the other hand, had identified itself with a progressive railway policy. There is no field of public endeavour that touches the individual farmer more vitally. His wheat is worth exactly the value per bushel in the ultimate market, less what it costs to land it there. The latter item is, therefore, one of the controlling factors, and one to be studied with infinite care. All the high-sounding clap-trap of the farmers' platform fades into insignificance compared with this all-important subject. But our farmer leaders find it hard to focus attention on such obvious, every-day, practical problems to the exclusion of fancy franchise acts, referendum, recall, prohibition, abolition of titles, single tax, and all the rest of it. The superstition prevails that as long as we fill our statutes with freak legislation, we will all be happy and prosperods. A moment's reflection should, however, convince us that there is no such royal road to an improved agricultural state. We had better come down from the clouds and ". 'saw wood'."

The speaker closed his address with an impassioned

appeal for the support of all thinking people for the enlightened politics and progressive administration of

the existing provincial administration.

Dick's turn had come. The chairman introduced him in a brief speech and he presently found himself facing the great, indistinct audience. He was not In his nervous. He felt he was amongst friends. opening remarks. Dick paid a graceful tribute to his opponent's eloquent speech. He, himself, was not a practised political speaker, nor was he a hide-bound partisan and had, therefore, little hesitation in affirming that he was in agreement with many of the sitting members' views. He referred to the fight that was at that time being waged in some of the drier areas of the "Deeds of heroism and sacrifice to keep the province. home together are all in a day's work," he said. of the settlers have their backs to the wall; comparatively few have given up the unequal struggle. Let us not forget that these are the very flower of our settlers. They are pioneers with purpose, moral strength and staying power, who will ultimately do their full share in making our Western country great and prosperous. The men of finance, industry and business, who often hold the fate of these people in their hands, cannot escape responsibility where they place avoidable obstacles in their path. If ever there were men and women deserving sympathy and worthy of the generous outpouring of the milk of human kindness, these are surely in the very front ranks. To deal harshly with them would be a national disgrace and a criminal act.

"We farmers believe that the financial, transportation and big business interests must be properly controlled and political action seems the only way to accomplish this purpose. We find our great banks quietly amalgamating. The credit power is being wielded by fewer and fewer agencies and we are apparently drifting towards absolute banking monopoly. The unscrupu-



lous demands of railway labour are responsible for maintaining freight rates on a war basis, which is strangling agriculture. Political action may in the end prove

futile, but we propose to try it.

"As regards the transportation issue, I utterly fail to see that the present government can derive much comfort from the manner in which this important subject has been dealt with. Enormous bond guarantees have been recklessly entered into by them, which has saddled this young province with a load of liabilities of so appalling dimensions that it has fairly brought it to the verge of bankruptcy. I think, perhaps, that the less my opponent has to say on this issue, the better it will be for his cause. When the agrarian party takes over the reins of government, which I feel confident we shall after this election, we will be face to face with the necessity of cleaning up the financial mess the present administration is solely responsible for—a task which

will test our ingenuity to the utmost degree.

The tariff question has been injected into this campaign. While it is a strictly Federal issue, it is a proper subject for debate because we farmers are waging war on the two existing political parties not alone in the provincial arena, but in the wider field as well. In the estimation of the farmer the old political parties to-day stand condemned on the tariff question. In spite of protestations to the contrary, they have nailed their colours to high protection. The Canadian farmer, representing, directly and indirectly, eighty per cent of the consumers, can reap little benefit from protection. His market is the wide world and he must face unrestricted competition from white, yellow and black He is heavily penalized on everything he purchases in order that industrial cities may be established east of Lake Superior, which can be of little or no economic benefit to the western farmer. We, rightly or wrongly, regard the high protective policy of Canada as

the clearest evidence of the complete political bank-

ruptcy of the old parties.

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"Canada is overwhelmingly agricultural. Western Canada almost entirely so. Rural prosperity must be the very foundation of our national prosperity. The old school of statesmen completely ignores this obvious As the farmer prospers industry will prosper. Wise statesmanship would remove all artificial handicaps from our basic pursuit. The creation of great industrial centres is not indispensable to the national welfare of the agricultural state. History teaches that lesson if it teaches anything. Denmark is a striking case in point. The industrial city the world over has become an abomination and a reproach to our boasted civilization. The tall chimney brings in its wake the slums and immorality of the congested city, unemployment, social strife and demands for class legislation. Many of us here to-night have taken up our abode in this great virgin country because we were driven forth, disgusted and weary with the social mess and vicious class warfare, from the over-crowded countries across the Atlantic. We had become victims of the modern worship of the industrial state. And now we find our public men deliberately attempting to duplicate in Canada the very abominations we fled from in horror and indignation."

Generous applause and shouts of encouragement punctuated Dick's address. He now applied himself particularly to issues more intimately affecting the constituency, with which he showed commendable familiarity. Roads, bridges, telephone extensions, and dozens of subjects of local interest-were touched upon and discussed with understanding.

"I am not one of these self-deceived purveyors of political and economical cure-alls that we hear so much about, nor, I hope, am I to be classed as an unscrupulous demagogue," Dick added. "I am just a plain



farmer, filled with sympathy for my brother farmers and imbued with an honest desire to improve our lot. Economically, agriculture is struggling under Middle Age market conditions. Cost of production is mounting by leaps and bounds in sympathy with the gluttonous demands of urban labour, which is, of course, immediate-

ly reflected in the cost of farming operations.

"The inexorable law of supply and demand arbitrarily dictate the value of agricultural products without the least reference to the cost of producing. After the farmer and his family have slaved early and late, wind and weather may destroy utterly, or in part, the result of his whole season's effort and, even if he is fortunate in this respect, he still runs the risk of having to sell his produce below actual cost. He is at the mercy of the elements and of his predatory fellow-men everyday of the year! He is now groping his way blindly. He is organizing economically, which is well. He is entering politics as a class, which conceivably may no the so helpful. But he must find these things out for himself. His economic situation is the great social crime of our generation, and the farmer is entitled to the fullest. sympathy of all classes in his efforts-well-directed or mis-directed—to deliver himself from bondage."

Thunderous applause followed the climax of Dick's speech. He resumed his seat well satisfied with the impression he had made. It was a most successful wind-up to an energetic campaign and he felt confident of the verdict at the polls. He purposely refrained from any direct appeal for votes. All through the campaign he had not asked a single voter for his support. The singing of the National Anthem ended the meeting. Dick, as he descended from the platform, received a veritable ovation from his friends in the audience, who crowded around him, congratulating him on his excel-

lent presentation of the farmers' case.

Dick was up and around by dawn the following

morning. It was a beautiful, warm summer day and everything was favourable to polling a large country vote. He was going to spend election day at his headquarters in Clearwater, where, at the close of the polls, the returns from outside points would come in over the telephone and telegraph wires. Encouraging reports were received during the day. Dick's nerves were being tested to the straining point, but with the arrival of the result of earlier polls, the suspense slackened. Clearwater gave him a majority of two to one. was practically the only doubtful point—the largest vote and the home of the sitting member. o'clock in the evening, the last poll reported. Dick had been elected by an overwhelming majority! He reach, ed for the phone and was soon connected with the "castle", where his parents received the good news with undisguised enthusiasm.

The following morning the final result of the general election was available. The Agrarians had swept the entire province and the government had gone down to dismal defeat. They would only have a mere corporal's guard in the new legislature. The responsibility of forming an administration was now a problem that the farmers would have to approach immediately. "old man", who had not been a candidate, had declined to assume the task, and a convention of elected and defeated candidates had been called at Calgary to agree on a political chief, to form the new government. 'Practically all the newly-elected farmer-legislators were absolutely without political experience. Events were being watched with great interest by the whole of Canada, and speculation was rife as to the probable composition of the new cabinet.

#### CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE MEETING of candidates, who had been nominated by the farmers' party in the provincial election contest, was held in Calgary behind closed Great excitement prevailed in the city and news was eagerly expected regarding the new cabinet to be formed. Aggressive press representatives were camped outside the doors of the hall and promptly button-holed any and every person who came out of the secret conclave, mercilessly plying them with leading questions in a vain endeavour to obtain inside information as to the proceedings of the conference. The farmers might not be skilled politicians, but they evidently understood the art of silence. By noon a brief statement was given out to the effect that no decisions of importance had been arrived at. The evening paper went to press with this meager and unsatisfactory information. An impenetrable veil of secrecy completely covered the proceedings of the conference.

The situation was absolutely unprecedented. government, which had been in power for many years, had been unceremoniously turned out, neck and crop. The predominant party elected consisted of an aggregation of farmers only one of whom had ever even sat in a representative body before and, consequently, had no experience whatever in public administration. To the "man-on-the-street", the whole crazy proceedings had a distinct flavour of comic opera. cular person appeared to be indicated for the responsibility of political leader. One name was apparently just as likely as another. The fortunate choice would simply walk from his farm right into the office of Prime Minister. The other cabinet ministers would of necessity all be absolutely untried and unknown men. Political history of an entirely new sort was to be written with a vengeance. It was to be the greatest adventure

in democracy on record!

The conference proceeded with its work imperturbably and went into a night session. In the early hours of the morning the new Prime Minister had been selected -a hard-headed farmer, a sterling and upright man. Everyone admitted that. He set to work immediately to construct his cabinet from the meager material at his disposal. A very few outsiders might perchance be brought in, but the majority of the cabinet must necessarily be composed of elected members. Did ever political leader face such a task? After a painful delay the slate was at length announced: Richard Anstruther. Minister of Public Works! Why not? Dick was head. and shoulders above most of his fellow-members in point of education. He was a presentable young man and had for years been one of the most self-sacrificing. capable and energetic workers in the cause. Under the circumstances, Dick could not fairly have been over-In fact, his was perhaps the most obvious looked. choice.

Dick, in a daze, drove home in his little flivver. Was he awake or was he dreaming? He could not bring himself to believe that it was real. The Honourable Richard Anstruther, Minister of Public Works! Could such a thing ever have happened anywhere else? Would it ever happen again? It was simply a political joke. Dick reached home as his parents were on the point of sitting down to the midday meal. He paused in the middle of the room and struck a theatrical attitude.

"Good people," he said, "just have a look at me,

won't you?"

"Are you sick, Dick?" asked Mrs. Anstruther an-

xiously.

"If I am, my malady is a mental one, and now I come to think of it, I really do believe I am a little distressed mentally. I am almost sure I am."



"Stop your nonsense, Dick," cried the Sage. "Don't you see that your mother is worrying about you?"

"Dear old Mater, you are perfectly right in worrying over me. In fact, I am in a beastly funk myself."

"Supposing you tell us what all this is about,"

suggested the Sage, smiling at Dick's absurdities.

"Well, to begin at the beginning—which may very well also be the end, as far as I am concerned—you see before you the Honourable Richard Anstruther, Minister of Public Works for the Province of Alberta, one of His Majesty's trusted advisers. At least, such will be my legal description as soon as I can appear before His Honour the Lieutenant Governor and take the oath of office."

Mrs. Anstruther was the proudest mother in the whole province that moment. The Sage shook his hand and congratulated him, almost overcome with emotion.

"Now, for heaven's sake," cried Dick, in mock desperation, "don't begin to tell me that this is merely my just reward, when everybody knows perfectly well that it is nothing of the sort. To me it all appears to be simply and utterly ridiculous."

"No, my boy, it is not ridiculous—it is just very unusual," corrected the Sage. "Of course, we all realize that such a thing could only happen in a new

country such as this."

"Well, God bless this country, anyway. I have not alone cinched a cabinet position, but I have also hooked a wife," ejaculated Dick vulgarly. "If Aunt Selina won't come off the perch now, I will proclaim to a breathless world that the old lady has a heart of marble. But I rather think she will."

His parents laughed boisterously, as Dick informed them that he was off to the telegraph office to convey the cheerful news to Edith. Fearing possible defeat, he

had told her very little of his political venture, so his announcement would come as a complete surprise to her. Dick's cable read

"ELECTED WITH LARGE MAJORITY. WILL BE SWORN IN AS MINISTER PUBLIC WORKS MONDAY NEW PROVINCIAL CABINET. ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL WE SHOULD BE MARRIED FORTHWITH BUT CANNOT POSSIBLY COME FOR YOU. WILL YOU JOIN ME HERE? REPLY QUICKLY."

## CHAPTER FORTY

EDITH and her Aunt were sitting in the drawing room sewing when the imposing family majordomo entered and ceremoniously handed Dick's cable to Edith. Edith opened it and read it with evident consternation.

"What is it, my dear? Nothing serious, I hope,"

asked Aunt Selina, with ill-disguised concern.

"No, Aunt Selina, it is nothing serious," replied Edith evasively. "That is," she added after a moment's reflection, "I don't think it is at all serious . . . but perhaps you may."

"She resolutely handed the cable to her Aunt, without

comment.

"Good heavens, child, what does all this mean?"

asked Lady Rokeby, completely bewildered.

"I suppose it just means that Dick wants me to marry him and, I am afraid, if I don't, I shall never marry anyone else," replied Edith. "Dear Aunt Selina, she cried impulsively throwing her soft arms around the old lady's neck, "we love each other so dreadfully much and you are not going to stand in our way. Are

you?"

That, of course, was absolutely irresistible! Aunt Selina, in spite of her exalted rank, was really quite human—even emotional; a secret of which Edith was very well aware. Indeed, Edith knew exactly how best to manage the old lady and in this particular instance she somehow contrived to manage her very competently. Really, no one could have done it better. Aunt Selina, after raising various obstacles, which, on general principles, she felt in duty bound to do, in the end gracefully capitulated.

Of course, due allowance must be made for the very unusual circumstances. Lady Rokeby could quite

appreciate the impossibility of a freshly-baked Minister. in a brand-new cabinet, leaving his post for a lengthy period. Aunt Selina, with her vast and intimate knowledge of politics and statesmen, entertained no illusions on that point. But why could not these tiresome children wait until young Anstruther could get leave to marry in England? It was preposterous that Edith should have to take this long trip alone and on such an errand! Conventions could not be ruthlessly cast to the wind in this fashion . . . Aunt Selina was not at all pleased. It all looked too much like an episode from the servants' hall. But Lady Rokeby had seriously entertained some idea of going abroad for a few weeks, and was rather undecided as to a suitable destination. The Riviera was, of course, quite out of the question at that time of the year. Besides, things were rather messy and unsettled all over the continent. Then came the happy inspiration! Why not go to Canada. and be present at Edith's wedding? She had vague ideas of a very attractive place called Banff, situated in the Rocky Mountains, not far from Calgary. A friend had mentioned something about it She might afterwards go on to the Pacific Coast and spend a delightful vacation in the Rockies en route. That seemed a very sound programme indeed. She would run up to London and see the steamship people to-morrow. The ocean trip was just what she wanted. She would almost certainly have a decent crossing, and she was a good sailor anyway, and would probably enjoy every moment of it.

So, purely as a concession to the proprieties and under stress of great pressure, she presently agreed to accompany Edith to Canada to see the matrimonial knot safely and conventionally tied. "Of course," she said to her friends, "I could not possibly let my dear sister's only child go out to that wild country alone and unprotected." Such things simply were not done.

The discerning reader has probably concluded that wild horses could not have kent Aunt Selina away from Edith's wedding.

Edith promptly dispatched a cable:

"CONGRATULATIONS. AUNT SELINA AND I LEAVING

WRITING." TWO WEEKS. LOVE TO ALL.

It cost her three shillings extra to convey "love to all," but it was well worth it she thought. It might as

well be recorded that Dick thought so too.

Lady Rokeby and Edith crossed on the Magnificent, the latest word in luxurious ocean liners. Aunt Selina did herself rather well when she travelled. "Lady Rokeby, Mrs. Cust and Maid." That is all the passenger list told their fellow-passengers about them. There was not the least hint of any romance at all. They occupied the place of honour at the captain's

table and had a very pleasant crossing indeed.

Travelling on annual passes over all railways, as became a full-fledged Minister of the Crown, Dick had gone to Winnipeg to meet the party. As the train rolled into the station there, he impatiently swung on board the observation car. Edith, of course, was on the look-out for him. A hurried kiss of welcome-one must not make scenes on the "Trans-Canada"—and he found himself the recipient of a dignified peck on the cheek by Aunt Selina. The train was soon on its westward course again and Edith and Dick found ample opportunity to get away by themselves. It may with safety be supposed that they did not find the time hanging heavily on their hands.

Shortly after the visitors had been comfortably installed in the hotel in Calgary and had rested up after the long journey, a powerful motor car was hired and a trip made to the Anstruther farm. Lady Rokeby was naturally most anxious to see Edith's future home and Edith was simply dying to visit this wonderful farm, where she was destined to spend such parts of her married life as Dick's official duties would, for the present, permit of their enjoying in his old home. As long as Dick was in public life she would necessarily live in the capital most of the time, but there would be glorious week-ends and holidays to be enjoyed away from the stress and strain of official headquarters.

The trip out was thoroughly appreciated and the noble lady found it necessary to somewhat revise her preconceived ideas of pioneer life. On arriving at the Anstruther farm and finding their home not very different from small English country houses, she even exclaimed, "This is more like Devonshire than Western Canada." Aunt Selina, though reserved in her judgment, almost concluded that Edith was going to be very comfortable indeed. No particular occasion, she thought, for pitying the child, as she had rather been mentally prepared to do.

Mrs. Anstruther took Edith all over the poultry houses. These would some day be her special responsibility. There was much to see and explain and Edith took it all in with deep interest and clear understanding. She herself was, by this time, a fairly experienced poultry woman, thanks to Aunt Selina's previous compliance

with her desire to learn the business.

The wedding was to take place at high noon; the day was bright and glorious. The Anstruthers drove to Calgary early in the morning, having previously sent on their trunks and satchels. Rooms had been reserved for them in the hotel, where their preparations would be made for the ceremony. The Lord Bishop of the Diocese would officiate. He proved to be an old acquaintance of Lady Rokeby's, with whom he had stayed on one of his visits to England in days gone by, when funds had to be collected there for the needs of his extensive mission field.

The cathedral was thronged with the usual crowd of curious people. The whole settlement was, of course,

there in their Sunday best, closely packed in the seats reserved for the invited guests. Lady Rokeby and Mrs. Anstruther took their places in the front pew as the bittle arrived. Edith made a lovely picture and many were the envious glances cast at the fortunate bridegroom, who greeted her with a happy smile. The service proceeded and presently they were made one; the bride endowed with all her husband's worldly goods, in return for which she had, inaudibly, promised to love, honour and obey him.

The family adjourned to the vestry and signed the register and, accompanied by the invited guests, repaired to the private dining room at the hotel, where a sumptuous wedding breakfast awaited them. The customary toasts were drunk and speeches made and the bride and groom presently disappeared to get themselves

ready for the departure?

It was all over. Edith and Dick had left in a handsome motor car, Lady Rokeby's wedding gift. They
were bound for Banff, that paradise of western honeymooners. It was an eighty-mile trip with gorgeous
scenery all the way. But scenery, of course, was at a
discount on an occasion of that sort. They made the
run in four hours, arriving at the magnificent hotel
just in time to get settled and dress for a late dinner.

After they had dined, they adjourned to the balcony overlooking the lovely Bow River valley. The moon had just risen from behind the mountain top and cast a weird, silvery sheen over the landscape, while the water-falls in the river below sent their incessant roar aloft. It was a scene of enchanting, mystic beauty. They were alone and Dick stole his arm around Edith's waist and drew her close.

"How do you think you will like your new home,

darling?" asked Dick softly.

"How could anyone help loving this perfectly wonderful country. And, oh, Dick, how splendid it is

that you are going to have your part in building it up and helping to make it great and prosperous for generations to come."

There spoke the daughter of statesmen. She would be an inspiration to her husband in his official life and would prove a tower of strength when the inevitable disappointments and defeats, inseparable from a public career, finally overtook him.

"With God's help and yours, I shall do my best,

dear," replied Dick gently.

#### THE END



